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LAND REFORM

UNITED STATES ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO VIET NAM, 1954-1975

VIET NAM TERMINAL REPORT

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VIETNAM TERMINAL REPORTLand Reform SectorI. 1955-65: President Ngo Dinh Diem's Land Reform\*

I.A. Pre-1955 Land Tenure History The Vietnamese struggle for independence stressed the need for a wider and more equitable distribution of land ownership as well as an alleviation of injustices inherent in prevailing land renting practices. For example, in 1945, approximately 2.5% of the landowners held about 50% of the cultivated land in the Southern Region, encompassing the Mekong Delta and 80% of the land in the Delta was cultivated by tenants. Rental rates were at a high 50% and interest rates and charges for loans of equipment and animals were also excessive. This situation was aggravated by periodic floods that wiped out even the meager returns anticipated by the tenant. Tenant farmers had no legal protection but were dependent on the good will of the landlord, and not enough of the landlords were concerned with the conditions of their tenants.

Since most of the land involved was riceland -- the major source of employment, food, and income of the farmers -- it is natural that discontent would be focused on the inequities and the great inequalities associated with the ownership of ricelands.

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\* Much of the material in this and the succeeding section II consists of adaptations of and verbatim extracts from discussions found in (1) William Bredo, et.al., Land Reform in Vietnam, Summary Volume and Working Papers, Stanford Research Institute, Menlo Park, California, 1968, and (2) MacDonald Salter, Land Reform in South Vietnam,

*note*  
*J. given*  
*2.1* { (cont. footnote)

Spring Review Country Paper, Agency for International Development,  
Washington, D.C., June 1970.

Non-Communist Land Reform

Modern efforts by the Vietnamese Government on land reform <sup>were</sup> ~~was~~ initiated by Emperor Bao Dai in his New Year's speech to the nation in 1951. In part, this was a response to insurgency pressures of the Viet Minh. As they gained control of lands, the Viet Minh sought political support of the population by deposing <sup>large landowners</sup> ~~landlords~~ and assigning tillers to the land. Emperor Bao Dai announced that henceforth land was not to be taken from peasants who had occupied landlord properties.

In mid-1952, "A National Committee for Agrarian Reform" was organized. In early 1953, President Nguyen Van Tam issued Ordinance 21 stating that henceforth rents were in no case to exceed 15% of those existing before the war, and this was followed up (June 4, 1953) by a number of ordinances.

Briefly, they called for cancellation of certain land concessions which had remained uncultivated or unleased and for the redistribution of such land among squatters and other specially deserving groups; a drastic rent reduction to a level not exceeding 15%, and additional rent agreed upon between landlord and tenant for buildings, tools, and draft animals; land leases for a minimum of five years, and what appeared to be limitations on the size of holdings.

However, the provisions of this Ordinance (No. 21) were so watered down as to make it meaningless.\* In effect, the landlords did not have to sell or otherwise dispose of the land held in excess of these limits: the sole limitation was upon their acquisition of additional land either by purchase or lease.

These provisions went either too far, as in the case of rent reduction, or not far enough, as in the case of limitation of land holdings. They were more an act of desperation than an enforceable set of provisions, and thus were ineffective political tools.

The real difficulty, however, was the Government did not hold sway over the countryside. Only after the Geneva Agreements, which divided the country, were agrarian reform measures effective.

When the Ngo Dinh Diem Government assumed power in 1954, the countryside was in a shambles. Much of the agricultural land was overgrown and irrigation facilities had fallen into disuse; canals needed re-dredging; there was a sharp decline in production and the peasants were a very much bewildered lot.

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\* Ordinance 21 set retention limits of 45 hectares in Central Vietnam and 100 hectares in South Vietnam. However, the landlord had the right to a 25% increase for the fourth and each succeeding child; since landlords with wives and concubines had large families, the retention limit was almost meaningless. An equally important misrepresentation was the tenant's

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permission to buy land at the prevailing market price, with the assistance of government credit. Basically, the credit was not available, the tenants had no cash, and with the prevailing market price of land they could not have bought it even had they had some cash.

Ladejinsky reports that by 1955, Free Vietnam had roughly a total of one million tenants, of which about 600,000 were in South Vietnam and 400,00 in Central Vietnam.\* The two parts of the country differed sharply from the point of view of the extent of tenancy. Individual owners possessing many thousands of hectares of land were common in South Vietnam -- and widespread tenancy the practice. In Central Vietnam, peasant proprietorship accounted for approximately three-fourths of the cultivated land. Land holdings were on a small scale. Of the estimated 650,000 landowners, no more than about 50 owned more than 100 hectares. The great mass of landlords fell into the category of 5 to 10 hectares, closely resembling the petty landlordism once prevalent in Japan, Korea and Taiwan and in a number of South East Asian countries.

Conditions in the south were entirely different. Figures available for 1955 indicate a total rice area of 2.3 million hectares. The concentration of land ownership was one of the highest in the Far East or Southeast Asia. Approximately 2.5% of the owners, with more than 50 hectares each, possessed roughly one-half of the cultivated land. On the opposite side of the

\*Wolf Ladejinsky, "Agrarian Reform in Free Vietnam", an address delivered on Oct. 24, 1959, by the then Land Reform Technical Consultant of the Presidency, Republic of Vietnam, reprinted in Wm. Bredo, op. cit., Working Papers, Vol. I-2, Appendix B-2.

scale, more than 70% of the proprietors owned less than 5 hectares each, possessing an estimated total of 12.5% of the cultivated land.

Two principal developments were responsible for this concentration. The French colonial administration sold huge tracts of virgin land at nominal prices or gave them away to selected individuals -- French and Vietnamese. The few truly big rice holdings were in the hands of the French companies, of which the single largest, "Domaine Agricole de l'Quest," accumulated a total of 20,000 hectares. The other important reason for the land concentration was the loss of the land by small proprietors due to their inability to meet the burden of indebtedness other than through foreclosure and eviction from the land. With so much land in few hands and the loss of land by the small proprietors, tenancy was inevitable. Two out of three families had no land at all; they worked somebody's else's land either as tenants or as agricultural laborers. At least 80% was cultivated by peasants who owned virtually no land whatever.

World War II and the almost continuous war conditions since have set in motion political forces that have drastically changed the relationships between landlords and tenants. Land reform efforts begun by the Viet Minh in 1946 and taken up by the Viet Cong in recent years have essentially eliminated landlordship in those areas controlled by the Viet Cong.

### Viet Minh Land Reform

The peculiarities of Asian agricultural economics do not lend themselves to the concept of the urban proletariat versus capitalist class struggle utilized so effectively in the Russian Communist Revolution. The adaptation of the Communist revolutionary concept to the Asian scene by Mao Tse-Tung involved the rural peasant society, since it included the majority of the population. Only with the support of the peasants was revolution feasible, and it followed that the attention of the Communists was drawn to existing inequalities in the rural society as a source of revolutionary appeals. Within the rural society, the inequities of greatest significance and utility were those associated with land. The landless peasants and poor peasants were at one pole of the unequal structure in the distribution of land, and the landlords and the rich peasants were at the other. Thus, in the search for a basis of revolution, the Viet Minh and the Viet Cong, like their predecessors in China, came naturally to land and to the inequalities associated with the traditional pattern of land tenure.

To conceal their leadership role in the Resistance War against the French, the Communists in Vietnam worked within the Viet Minh, which combined several nationalist as well as Communist groups. In 1945, the role of land reform in Viet Minh strategy against the French was embodied in the slogan "Land to the Tillers." Inherent in the idea of "Land to the Tillers" is the existence of peasant discontent.

In the early stages of the Resistance War, French landholdings in Vietnam were the initial targets of confiscation and redistribution. The



general Viet Minh practice for redistribution of French-owned riceland was merely to inform the peasants that they owned the land they had worked on before as tenants and that they no longer had to pay rent to the owner. Since most of the French owners did not live on their land and preferred to leave the management of their holdings in the hands of Vietnamese overseers, the redistribution process was fairly simple. Moreover, the armed strength of the Viet Minh guerrillas in the rural areas of Vietnam dissuaded most French owners from resisting the redistribution.

The actual redistribution of French-owned riceland in Vietnamese villages did not follow any set pattern. Rather, the amount given each peasant family usually depended on the amount of land available. In some areas of the Mekong Delta, the average amount redistributed was from one to three hectares per family. Elsewhere in Vietnam, the allotment per individual peasant family was as small as half a hectare or less. Although some individual rice plantations were as large as 5,000 hectares, the redistribution of French-owned land did not begin to satisfy the needs of the peasants. Excluding rubber, coffee, and tea plantations, French riceland holdings in Indochina (which included present-day Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos) were only about 300,000 hectares, and 80% of this was concentrated in the Mekong Delta.

To provide more land for redistribution to the peasants, the Viet Minh confiscated land belonging to large Vietnamese landlords, whose total holdings in Vietnam were much more extensive than those of the French.

Nationalism became a weapon of the Viet Minh against Vietnamese landlords who were identified with the French as enemies who had to be liquidated.

Viet Minh land reform was far more than the mere redistribution of Vietnamese-owned land. It was also a way to destroy the traditional social organization in the villages, by using the existing class distinctions between villagers -- distinctions that were sharpened by the Viet Minh through the Communist method of the "class struggle."

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The "class struggle" initiated by the Viet Minh followed the general pattern standardized earlier in China by Mao Tse-Tung. This entailed the classification of the village population into four main groups, according to the amount of land and property a villager owned: (1) "dia-chu" (landlords), who owned more than 50 hectares of land; (2) "phu-nong" (rich peasants), who owned less than 50 hectares; (3) "trung-nong" (middle peasants), who owned less than 5 hectares; and (4) "bai co nong" (poor peasants), who were landless or tenant farmers. The landlords were called reactionaries and exploiters of the poor, and the confiscation and redistribution of their land was said to be necessary to bring about social justice for the peasants.

To achieve its goal of gaining peasant support against the landlords, the Viet Minh employed terror against those who did not support the Viet Minh or whose land was to be confiscated and redistributed. The primary purpose of the Viet Minh terrorism was to eliminate one social group (the landlords) to gain the support of and eventual control over a large social group (the peasants). The landowning class, if not eliminated entirely, was reduced in socioeconomic position through the application of "binh san luong" (leveling of economic status), through which the Viet Minh sought to reduce the economic position of the landlords and thus "equalize" the economic status of the rural population and to meet the Viet Minh's own economic requirements for carrying on the struggle.

When faced with such obvious threats to themselves and their families, many landowners living in the villages took the only alternative open to them and fled. Their lands and property were immediately confiscated and redistributed. Since the amount of land available for redistribution in each village varied, a standard procedure for redistribution was to determine the number of members in a family and give the individual peasant enough land to provide for his family's subsistence and a small surplus. Supplemental redistribution of usually less than one hectare was often made to those peasants who owned small amounts of land. This measure was intended to bring their total holdings up to the minimum requirements for subsistence. Rarely more than two or three hectares were redistributed to an individual family, and usually the amount of land given was less than one hectare.

If a landowner was not forced by the Viet Minh to give up all or part of his land for redistribution, he was probably coerced to reduce by as much as 80 percent the rent he received from his tenants. Before the rent reduction, an average land rent was between 25 and 50 percent of the annual harvest, depending on the quality of the land and the crop. By either land redistribution or rent reduction in the areas it controlled, the Viet Minh was able to gain the support of a sufficient number of the peasants for the successful pursuit of revolutionary war against the French.

An important point is that throughout the Resistance War, the Viet Minh efforts at expropriation and redistribution were aimed almost entirely at the French and the larger Vietnamese landowners. The middle peasants, who also owned small parcels of land in the villages in which they lived and worked, were virtually unaffected by the Viet Minh land reform. This middle peasant group, according to Hoang Van Chi, formed the bulk of the landowning class in Vietnam, and yet were considered by the Communists as part of the population exploited by the landowners.\*

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\* Hoang Van Chi, From Colonialism to Communism, 1961

I.B. U.S. Advisory/Assistance Effort

I.B.1 Strategies - The land reform program of the Diem Government was designed, with the assistance of U.S. Economic Advisors, to help achieve four primary political, economic and social objectives:\*

1. "Greater political stability by a) reducing landlord exploitation of peasants and b) creating a larger class of small landowners.
2. Redistribution of income from wealthy landowners to poor farmers.
3. Increased agricultural production by a) improving farmer incentives to invest and to adopt new production techniques and b) encouraging cultivation of new and abandoned land.
4. Increased investment in industry by former landlords."

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\* This summary of objectives appears in a draft Ph.D. dissertation by C. Stuart Callison, Land-to-the-Tiller in the Mekong Delta: Economic, Social and Political Effects of Land Reform in Four Villages of South Vietnam, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., 1975, Chapter III.,

## I.B.2. Personnel Assigned and Funds Expended\*

### 1955-60

During the 1955-60 period, two U.S. advisers were deeply involved in the development of land reform policies and programs of President Diem's administration. U.S. assistance underwrote a large proportion of their costs in the 1950s.

U.S. project assistance financed most of the costs of the 700-man expansion of the Vietnamese Land Service required to implement the land redistribution and tenancy improvement programs. Approximately 100 seven-man field teams of surveyors were established. Dollar assistance financed their equipment, and counterpart funds paid their salaries through 1960. Nonproject assistance indirectly financed approximately one-half the cash compensation payments for expropriated land. Landowners received 10 percent in cash and 90 percent in 12-year bonds from the GVN.

U.S. project assistance similarly financed most of the equipment and committees for the Land Development Centers while counterpart funds covered a large part of the local currency costs as indicated below.

	<u>U.S. Dollar Assistance</u>	<u>Counterpart Support in U.S. Dollars</u>
Redistribution programs	\$ 282,000	\$ 3,257,428
Tenancy improvement programs	<u>4,582,000</u>	<u>6,794,285</u>
Land development programs	\$4,864,000	\$10,051,713
Total		

Regarding advisory assistance by the United States, during the early part of the 1954 to 1960 period, two advisors were funded by ICA (first Wolf Ladejinski, who later became a direct advisor to President Diem, and then Price Gittinger). Land reform was a matter of high priority during this period in the United States assistance program.

### 1961-65

Little land reform work was done in this period in the Republic of Vietnam, largely because of deteriorating security and political instability. No U.S. funds were provided, and there were no U.S. advisors.

I.C. The Diem Land Reform Measures

Ngo Dinh Diem recognized agrarian

reform as one of his most urgent tasks. He appeared to recognize this as a method of reducing the appeal of Communism to the rural masses. As a first step, his administration sought to alleviate four principal problems faced by tenants in landlord-tenant relations by:

1. Placing effective limits on rental charges
2. Providing the tenant with a greater degree of security of tenure
3. Placing limits on the obligation to pay rent in the event of substantial crop failure.
4. Placing the tenant in a legal position to have right of first refusal should the landlord attempt to sell the land.

These basic principles were embodied in Ordinance 2 of January 8, 1955 and Ordinance 7 of February 5, 1955. The former sought to eliminate the worst features of landlord-tenant relations through rent reduction and provision of security of tenure while the latter was concerned with putting back into cultivation abandoned land believed to have amounted to as much as 800,000 hectares.

The main provisions of Ordinance 2 were as follows:

Rentals ranged from 15 to 25 percent of the principal crop; a loan of seed or fertilizer was repayable at cost price plus interest rate not exceeding 12 percent per year; all contracts had to be in writing; the life of a lease was a minimum of five years, and the traditional right of a landlord to cancel a lease agreement was circumscribed; village, district and provincial committees were to be created to settle landlord-tenant disputes; finally, penalties were provided in case of failure to comply with the provisions of the Ordinance.

The significant provisions of Ordinance 7 were these.

Having determined the amount of the abandoned or uncultivated acreage, each owner was obliged to declare his intentions with respect to this land. If he refused to cultivate the land himself, he had to lease the land to tenants of his own choosing. In that event, a three-year lease was to be executed, under which the tenant paid no rent during the first year, half of the prescribed rent of 15 or 25 percent during the second year and three-fourths of the rent during the third year. The landlord, in turn, was exempted from the land tax, and the same applied to the tenant. On the expiration of the special three-year contract, the normal contract for five years became compulsory. In the case of absentee landlords, the village council had the right to

allocate the land to people willing to cultivate the land.

The rent, after deduction of taxes, was to be held by the provincial treasury for future payment to the owner. Model contracts were drawn up, printed and distributed by the hundreds of thousands as an aid to implementation.



Diem's next step, after becoming President in 1956, was to undertake a policy of land redistribution with the twin objectives of eliminating the evils of big landlordism and of converting tenants into small owners of land on a mass scale. Mr. Diem repeatedly expressed the view that widespread, individual ownership of land is the condition for economic and political stability in the countryside. It was clear to the President that the Communist threat in the villages was fed by the tension inherent in the land tenure relationships. He felt a more equitable redistribution of land was required, and that the incentive of land ownership would increase productivity of the rice lands.

On October 22, 1956, Ordinance 57 was promulgated and land redistribution became the policy of the Government of Vietnam. The objectives were stated as equitable distribution among the landless, development of agricultural production and the re-orientation of the big landlords towards investment in industrial activities. Limitations on land ownership were set at no more than 100 hectares, but with an additional 15 hectares permitted for worship land; a landlord could cultivate by himself only 30 hectares; the other 70 hectares must be leased or sold. The land affected by the Ordinance was riceland only. The excess holdings were to be purchased by the government and sold in order of priority to tenants and agricultural workers who had cultivated the land for two years; war-veterans, refugees, and the unemployed. The basic intent was for land to go to the tenants already on the land. Tenants acquiring land under the reform could not lease or mortgage it within ten years of the date of acquisition. The tenant was to pay for the land in six annual installments, and he would receive a certificate of ownership prior to his payment and clear title of ownership after completing his payments. The land price to the tenant was determined by the compensation the Government paid to the owner for the land. Compensation for the land was fixed by regional

committees, approved by the National Council of Land Reform, and was favorable to the tenant. It turned out to be three to four times the annual production of the land. Compensation to the landlord took the form of 10 percent of the value of the land in cash and the remainder in non-transferrable government bonds, bearing a 3 percent interest rate and amortized in 12 years. However, the bonds could be used as legal tender for paying off debts contracted with the Agricultural Credit Agency, for land and inheritance taxes or for investment in public enterprises.

The Ordinance provided for the establishment of a National Council on Agrarian Reform, with powers broad enough to deal with all outstanding issues involved in the implementation of the reform. There were also, in addition, provincial and local committees to determine the acreage available for distribution, the fixing of land prices, the issuance of titles to new owners, and related subjects. Agrarian tribunals who prescribed stiff penalties for evading the provisions of the reform law were part of the administrative arrangement.

This program was clearly meant for South Vietnam where there were large single holdings. In Central Vietnam, holdings seldom exceeded 10-15 hectares. It was estimated that approximately 30 percent of the tenants in the South would fall within the scope of the program. The relatively high retention limit was considered by the government as a first step aimed at

the large landlords and not affecting the rural middle class.

In a second step of this land redistribution program, the French Government cooperated, and, in the Vietnamese-French Convention of September 10, 1958, undertook to finance the GVN purchase of rice-lands owned by French citizens.

#### I.D. Achievements and Non-Achievements

I.D.1. Landlord-Tenant Relationships - Through Ordinance 20 and 2, the GVN Land Reform Program sought to improve landlord-tenant relationships through use of written contracts, control of rent levels, provisions for sharing of risks of crop failure, extension of security of tenure and provision of pre-emption right to tenants.

Enforcement of Written Contracts. Government statistics tended to be optimistic about what had been accomplished in requiring written contracts, but sample surveys conducted by Stanford Research Institute indicated that the regulations were enforced to a much lesser degree than shown by government statistics. Table <sup>1</sup>/<sub>7</sub>, from records compiled by the Directorate of Land Reform, indicates that a total of 660,663 contracts of all types (A, B, and C) were in effect in September 1968; these covered 1,327,869 hectares. Of this number, 563,530 contracts were in the Southern Region

Table 1

**REGISTERED AND RENEWED CONTRACTS BETWEEN LANDLORDS AND TENANTS AS OF SEPTEMBER 15, 1968**  
**(Number of Registered Tenure Contracts Between Landowners and Tenants as of September 15, 1968)**  
**(Areas in Hectares)**

	Type of Contracts						Total A/B/C	Cultivated Area
	A		B		C			
	Number	Cultivated Area	Number	Cultivated Area	Number	Cultivated Area		
Vietnam	492,573	869,747	77,593	219,578	90,497	238,544	660,663	1,327,869
Southern Region	402,911	839,462	72,862	216,934	87,757	237,453	563,530	1,293,849
Central Region	89,662	30,285	4,731	2,644	2,740	1,091	97,133	34,020

(Number of Renewed Tenure Contracts Between Landowners and Tenants as of September 15, 1968)

	Type of Contracts						Total A/B/C	Cultivated Area
	A		B		C			
	Cultivated		Cultivated		Cultivated			
	Number	Area	Number	Area	Number	Area		
Vietnam	54,968	91,336	1,634	4,320	3,701	8,987	60,303	104,642
Southern Region	32,445	83,439	1,570	4,279	3,695	8,983	37,710	96,701
Central Region	22,523	7,897	64	41	6	3	22,593	7,941

**Note:** Type A contracts are between tenants and landlords on established cultivated holdings.  
Type B contracts are between tenants and landlords for cultivating abandoned lands requiring some conditioning of the land.  
Type C contracts are between tenants and the Government for cultivating abandoned lands requiring considerable conditioning of the land.

**Source:** Directorate of Land Reform, Ministry of Land Reform and Agriculture.

covering 1,293,849 hectares. The validity of these statistics is questionable, for several reasons. First, the tabulations from the Hamlet Resident Survey indicated that only 37% of all tenants had written contracts, contrasted with 63% with verbal contracts. These results agreed closely with the response of landlords in the Absentee Landlord Survey. SRI survey results for the Southern Region estimated the existence of only about 78,000 written contracts covering about 184,000 hectares in contrast to government records indicating 563,530 written A,B,and C contracts covering 1,293,849 hectares. Second, in handling statistics for written contracts, there was apparently no administrative technique in force to eliminate inactive or duplicate contracts no longer in effect. Thus, it can be expected that these contract totals would have an upward bias. These figures were based on historical records so that totals for early recorded years may not reflect the 1968 contract status.

In addition, according to the SRI Village Administrative Chief Survey, two-thirds of all villages in the sample studied either had no lease contract register or had one that <sup>was</sup> ~~is~~ virtually useless. Finally, only about 60,000 contracts were indicated as being officially renewed. Since the law did not make it clear whether "tacit renewal" could take place more than once, there was doubt from a legal point of view whether the administrator or the parties to the original contracts would continue to regard them as binding in any instance where a new contract has not been signed <sup>at</sup> ~~,~~ least within the

past ten years. However, the surveys indicated what appeared to be cultural acceptance of verbal agreements for both renewal and new contract arrangements.

Control of Rent Levels. The attempt to hold rents below a 25% maximum ceiling substantially failed. Notwithstanding rental limits established by decree, the forces of supply and demand for land continued to operate. In areas where the proportion of tenancy was high, actual rentals were likely to press against or exceed the legal limit. Results of the Hamlet Resident Survey in the Southern Region indicated that rental rates exceed<sup>ed</sup> authorized limits with an average rate of 34%. About 61% of the tenants in the Southern Region paid rental amounts in excess of the 25% legal limit. In the Central Lowland, the practice of paying excessive rents secretly was noted by the Commissioner General for Land Courts in 1962:\*

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\* The Commissioner General's Report<sup>/</sup>is presented in Wm. Bredo, op. cit., Working Papers, Vol. I, Appendix D-20, and pertinent portions are extracted below.

"The situation of "enough land for many farmers" emphasizes the law of supply and demand and although the contract has assigned the land rent, both sides have agreed secretly to a higher rent."

"...It is known that there is 'black-market rent'..."

"Very high rent is paid for seedling-producing rice land...The landlord can get this rent because the tenant must rent what land he can. Sometimes the tenant pays VN\$2,000 per hectare to rent this seedling-producing land."

"...the law of supply and demand still operates...the tenant must make an inside or secret agreement with the landlord."

Apparently the rental rates were directly related to the level of security. There is some indication both in the Southern Region and the Central Lowlands that the excess rental rates were moderate to nonexistent in insecure areas, with rents climbing to approximately 50% where the land was secure. Legal regulations may have tended to dampen excess rentals paid above legal limits; however, it appeared that the regulations that held tenant and landlord equally guilty if excessive rents were paid drive the bargaining process underground. If the tenant had been free from fear of punishment for paying excessive rent, he might have been more likely to cooperate in exposing the demanding landlord. The research team found no indication of legal steps taken to punish landlords or tenants for



charging or paying excess rents.

Although official rental rates were established at a maximum of 25%, no ceiling applied to metayage contracts, which predominated in the Central Lowland and were exempted by law. Discussions in a village/<sup>near</sup>

Nha Trang suggested a typical rental payment of 50% for land only, with no ~~other~~ services offered in spite of reference to such verbal contracts as metayage.

Sharing of Risk of Crop Failure by Landlords. In the regulations, provision has been made for the landlord to bear part of the risk of crop failure with the tenant. However, from survey results, it is apparent that most of the risk of crop failure is now borne by the tenant without the assistance of the landlord. The administration of this law appears to be ineffective in providing protection for the tenant farmer.

According to Ordinance 2, Article 16, and Circular 16, in case of one-third crop failure the agreed-on fixed rent should be reduced by at least two-thirds, and rent should be foregone completely if crop failure was over two-

thirds. However, the Hamlet Resident Survey results show that 25 percent of the tenants who had fixed rental agreements and suffered complete crop failures did not receive any rent reduction at all. Among the tenants who reported partial or total crop failure (amounting to about 79 percent of all tenants), only 63 percent declared they received some reduction or complete reduction of rents. While many landlords did reduce rents to compensate for crop failures, the survey results nevertheless indicate noncompliance with the law by a substantial proportion of landlords.

Security of Tenure. No procedure had apparently been developed to estimate illegal attempts by landlords to displace tenants. Discussions with Vietnamese Federation of Tenant Farmers officials indicated that this was not a major problem. A contributing factor was apparently the shortage of farmers because of the large numbers of young men who had been recruited for the armed forces. Indeed, farmers were observed to be typically in their middle fifties, according to the SRI results.

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However, there were disputes over attempted legal displacement of tenants. For example, 251 agrarian reform court cases were heard, to settle disputes concerning the term of contract. Between the establishment of the court and 1968, another 1,100 disputes resulted from attempts of the landlord to regain operation of his farm; that is, 1,351 disputes out of a total of 2,100 were concerned with tenure terms. These statistics do not include settlements between parties arranged by Village Agricultural Committees. In total, 17,560 litigations were handled with 15,643 settled successfully. Normally, disputes were first discussed in the Village Agricultural Committee to give both parties a chance to resolve their differences before approaching the Land Court.

Pre-Emption Rights. Pre-emption rights refer to the rights of tenants to be given the first chance to buy the lands that they work, if the landlord decides to sell. This is also called the right of first refusal to purchase farmlands. Data from the surveys indicated a reluctance on the part of landlords to sell their land to tenants; they apparently preferred to hold it principally for members of their family. No data were found that might indicate the number of tenants who have exercised pre-emption rights to purchase their farms from the landlord. However, 154 recorded cases, in which the right to purchase farmlands was the reason for the dispute, were heard in the Land Courts.

#### I.D.2. GVN Land Redistribution

As previously indicated, GVN Land Reform Policies fall into two categories: (1) improvement of landlord-tenant relationships, and (2) widening of the ownership base by governmental acquisition and redistribution of large landholdings to small farmers. A general geographical limitation in effect was placed on the land redistribution program at the outset. Although the program was intended for all of South Vietnam, actually of the three regions--Central Highlands, Central Lowlands, and Southern--the Southern Region was the only area affected and the primary recipient of the program's benefits, for the following reasons:

- Central Highlands. This region has little agricultural land and population (only 5 percent of the total population of the Republic of Vietnam). Hence, the GVN acquired no land in the Central Highlands. The region is predominantly occupied by Montagnard tribes, who farm generally on a group rather than an individual basis.

- Central Lowlands. This region has little French land and only two individuals owning more than 100 hectares; hence, land acquisition and redistribution affected only a small number of land holdings, as shown in the following tabulation.\*

Region II Provinces	Hectares of Riceland Distributed in Central Lowlands					
	Ordinance 57 Land			Former French Land		
	Expro.	Distr.	Undistr.	Purchased	Distr.	Undistr.
Binh Thuan	148	146	2	168	12	156
Khanh Hoa	--	--	--	63	--	63
Ninh Thuan	--	--	--	3,545	1,719	1,826
Phu Yen	--	--	--	629	--	629
Total	148	146	2	4,405	1,731	2,674

The small size of owned farms provided limited opportunity for land redistribution in the Central Lowlands. However, Ordinances 20 and 2 were carried out in the region with the aim of improving landlord-tenant relations. The effort was limited by Circular 22 of June 10, 1959, which specifically exempted metayage (share-cropping) from regulation, stating "about metayage we maintain the present structure." (The "present structure" was that established under the Royal Civil Code of Annam.)

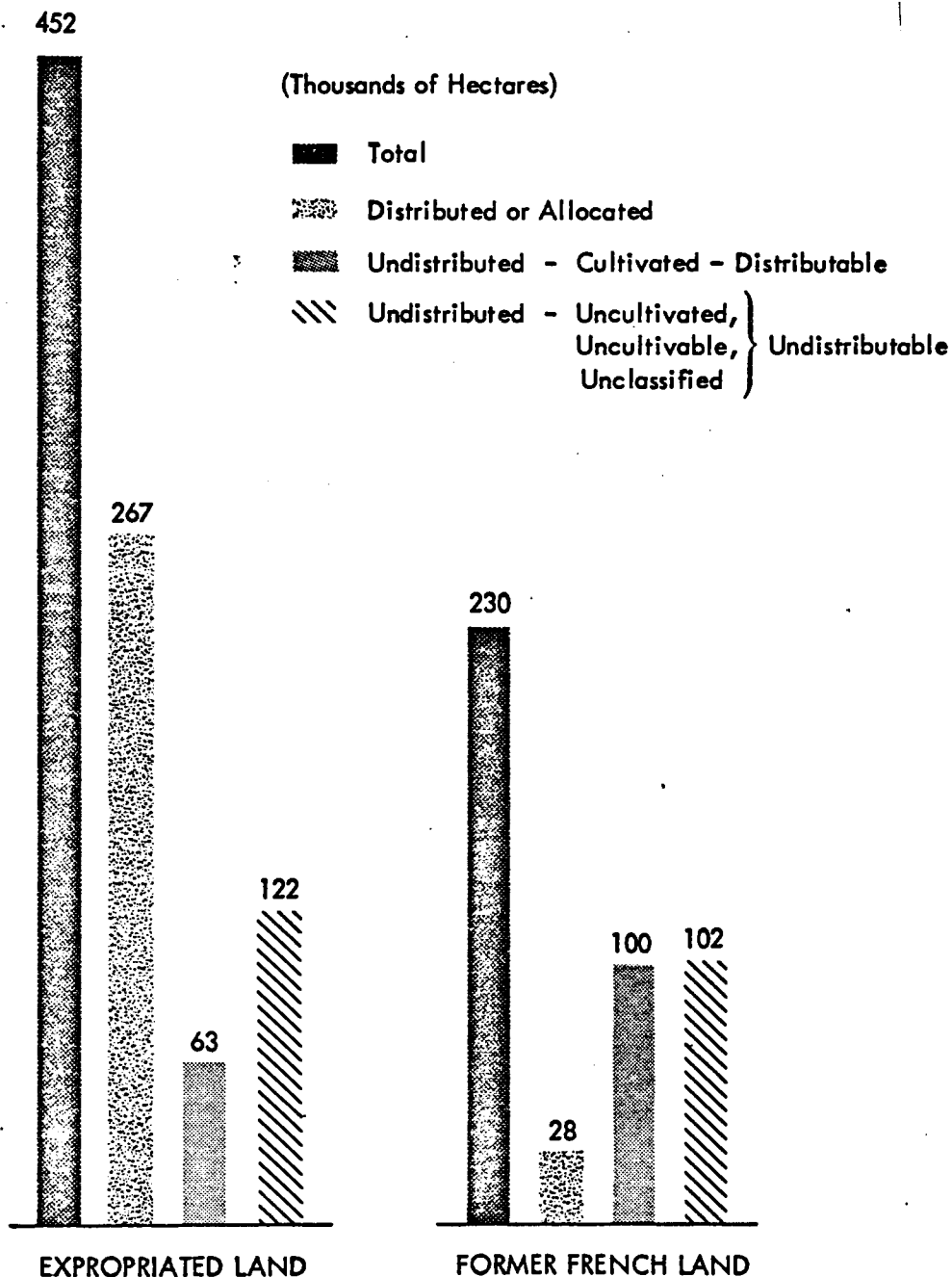
- Southern Region. This region contained practically all of the riceland in the Republic of Vietnam--2.3 million hectares. Of this total, about 1.2 million hectares were held by 2.5 percent of the owners, many of whom had thousands of hectares of land. Therefore, both the land redistribution and the tenure laws were focused on the Southern Region.

As of July 1968, the redistribution of the various categories of land had been completed to the extent shown in Figure 1. From the figure, it is seen that only distribution of the Ordinance 57 lands had moved a substantial way toward completion and that the distribution of former French land had just begun.

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\* Source: Directorate of Land Reform, July 15, 1968, Ministry of Land Reform and Agriculture.

Figure 1  
 STATUS OF DISTRIBUTION  
 OF  
 GOVERNMENT OWNED LAND  
 July 15, 1968



SOURCE: Office of Land Reform Advisor,  
 USAID, Republic of Vietnam.

A breakdown of land distribution by number of farmers and hectares involved is shown in Table 2. The net effect as shown by Figure 1 is that by 1968, only 267,000 hectares of expropriated land (59%) had been redistributed. With just 59% of the lands distributed that were expropriated in previous years (81% of the cultivated land), this program could be considered at best only partially successful. Title distribution was even less successful with less than 15% of those receiving lands having received permanent titles. Much of the undistributed expropriated land was apparently in areas that were under control of the Viet Cong.

The land remaining to be distributed was generally of two kinds: "cultivated" and "uncultivated uncultivable, and unclassified." The uncultivated but cultivable land was largely rice land which was not cultivated because it was uneconomic or because of insecurity, abandonment by farmers and other reasons aside from land quality. The cultivable land might have been abandoned because it was uneconomic to farm in view of the taxes and restrictions imposed by the Viet Cong, and the owners may have elected to become refugees. Some cultivable land may also not have been farmed because of the high investment that may be required to put it into production. Of the total amount of land expropriated under Ordinance 57 or purchased from French owners, one-third of it (223,436 hectares) was uncultivated, uncultivable, or unclassified, and therefore, undistributable.

Table 2

STATUS OF EXPROPRIATED AND FORMER FRENCH LANDS  
AS OF JULY 15, 1968

	Ordinance 57		Former French		Total	
	Farmers	Hectares	Farmers	Hectares	Farmers	Hectares
Distributed or Allocated Lands*						
General Recipients	116,741	250,563	7,562	21,860	124,303	272,423
Land Development Centers						
Cai San I	2,870	8,608	1,905	5,715	4,775	14,323
Cai San II	1,130	2,823	--	--	1,130	2,823
Other	2,000	4,884	--	--	2,000	4,884
Sub-Total	6,000	16,315	1,905	5,715	7,905	22,030
TOTAL DISTRIBUTED OR ALLOCATED	122,741	266,878	9,467	27,575	132,208	294,453
Undistributed or Unallocated Lands*						
Cultivated	21,000	63,227	--	100,425	--	163,652
Uncultivated†	--	121,896	--	51,300	--	173,196
Status Unknown†	--	--	--	50,240	--	50,240
TOTAL UNDISTRIBUTED OR UNALLOCATED	21,000	185,123	--	201,965	--	387,088
GRAND TOTALS - Land Acquired		452,001		229,540		681,541

\* Allocated means applications for purchase have been received, approved at Village level and being processed further.

† Both categories are estimates reflecting a condition of uncertainty but present a reasonably accurate picture.

Source: "Activities of Land Reform Directorate," July 16, 1968 (Monthly Activities Report) by Directorate General of Land Affairs and "Abstracts from the 1967 Annual Report, Directorate General of Land Affairs, GVN" by Land Reform Staff, USAID.

It was not known how much of the uncultivated abandoned land had reverted to a wild state. However, it was estimated that half of the uncultivated French land was arable, while the balance would have required improvements such as major irrigation and drainage projects. Perhaps 10% of all ricelands acquired by the GVN was in roads, ditches, and canals.



Although land redistribution carried out under Ordinance 57 increased the portion of land owned by the smaller owners, it was not substantial. A comparison of tax data results indicated that 10% of the large owners held 65% of the land in 1955 and that land reform reduced this ownership to 55% of the riceland. While the Ordinance 57 land reform program accomplished a basic objective of eliminating large land ownership by individuals in excess of 100 hectares, it did not, according to survey results, significantly reduce concentration of land ownership by land redistribution.

A concerted attempt was made to implement the planned land reform program, but the problems encountered were many and complicated. There were not enough technically trained administrators, not enough security in the rural countryside, and not enough funds to carry out the plans.

The mechanics of distributing land appeared satisfactory during the first few years. However, later results indicate that the normal legal procedures were too slow because they required too many steps in a fixed sequence -- i.e., identification of large land holdings; determination of owners; declaration of excess lands; identification of tenants and measurement of units to be purchased; execution of purchase transactions, surveys and land valuation; transfers of lands; and provision of titles.

Possibly most of this land could have been distributed during the early years of President Diem's Government when security was better. Later, the war and the insecurity of many areas created problems in carrying out the existing land reform program. The Viet Cong, with the aid of the North Vietnamese intrusion, caused confusion and rendered distribution of much of this land extremely difficult and some perhaps impossible.

In Table <sup>3</sup>/<sub>2</sub>, the rapid early progress in the program of expropriation and redistribution may be compared with the period subsequent to 1961 when redistribution virtually halted despite a large accumulation of expropriated lands. The comparisons become more visible when given graphically, as shown in Figure <sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub>.

Figure <sup>3</sup>/<sub>3</sub> shows that expropriation and distribution of Ordinance 57 lands were effective up to 1962 (54%), but that only 1% was redistributed from 1963 to 1967, with a somewhat higher figure (4%) in 1968. Adding to this slowdown was the scattered and uneven effect of distribution from the standpoint of some villages and provinces and hence the uneven impact of distribution on the rural population.

Purchase of land was slow (taking three years) because of use of existing administrative procedures, missing land registers, lack of up-to-date land registration records, and requirements for legal proof of ownership. By the end of 1961, nearly all the

229,259 hectares (567,000 acres) were acquired by the GVN, representing about 10% of the Republic of Vietnam's riceland area. French citizens were compensated in a lump sum cash payment of the French franc equivalent of US\$12 per hectare.\* (However, added to this should be an unknown but considerable amount previously paid for war indemnities covering damaged lands.) The purchased French land plus the Ordinance 57 land contained a total of 20% of the nation's cultivated rielands that were transferred from large landholders to the GVN, causing a significant reduction in landlord influence.

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\* Land amounting to 10,648 hectares, less than 5% of the former French lands, was sold to the GVN under Ordinance 57 for the Vietnamese piaster equivalent of US\$127 per hectare (based on VN\$4,450 per hectare at the exchange value of VN\$35 per dollar).

Table 3

**ACCUMULATED EXPROPRIATED, DISTRIBUTED, AND UNDISTRIBUTED  
LAND AREAS IN VIETNAM UNDER ORDINANCE 57**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Accumulated Expropriated (ha)</u>	<u>Accumulated Distributed (ha)</u>	<u>Accumulated Undistributed (ha)</u>
1958	101,011	21,635	79,376
1959	152,671	55,603	97,068
1960	411,632	150,503	261,129
1961	422,431	243,615	178,816
1962	428,445	245,877	182,568
1963	430,206	246,166	184,040
1964	435,541	246,940	188,601
1965	440,676	237,774	202,902
1966	447,241	248,902	198,339
1967	451,481	266,863*	184,618
1968	452,001	266,878*	185,123

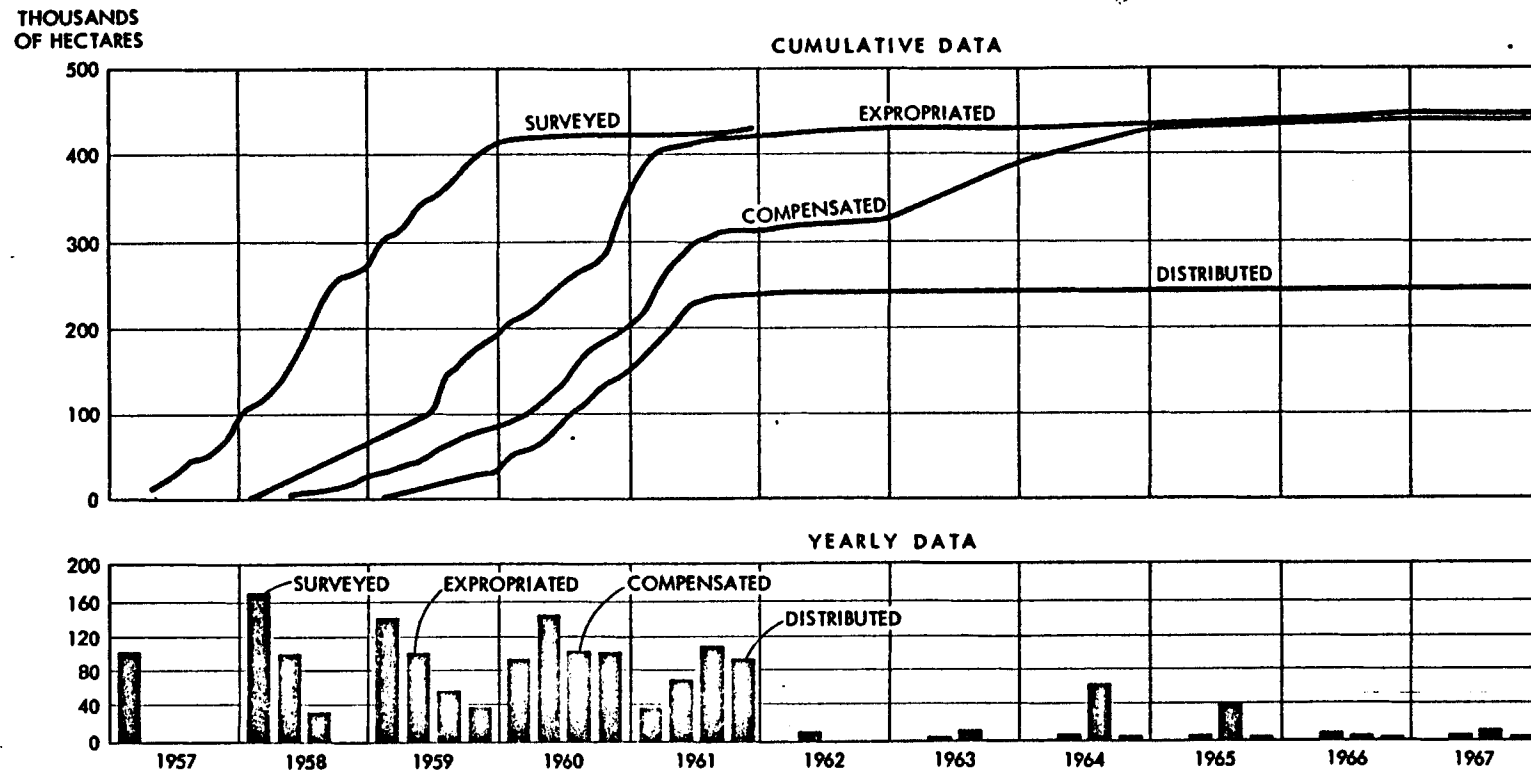
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\* Includes approximately 16,000 hectares of expropriated land located in land development and resettlement centers where ownership was granted rather than sale of land under Ordinance 57 procedures.

Source: Directorate of Land Reform, unpublished land statistics concerning land reform in the Republic of Vietnam, December 1967.

A large amount of the former French-owned lands was in big plantations and was developed with irrigation, drainage, and water control facilities. Recommendations for use of these lands were requested by the GVN from Province Chiefs in 1960. Suggestions included establishment of agrovilles, free allocation to families of soldiers, establishment of development centers, state-managed plantations, lease to farmers, and allocation to tenants under Ordinance 57 provisions.

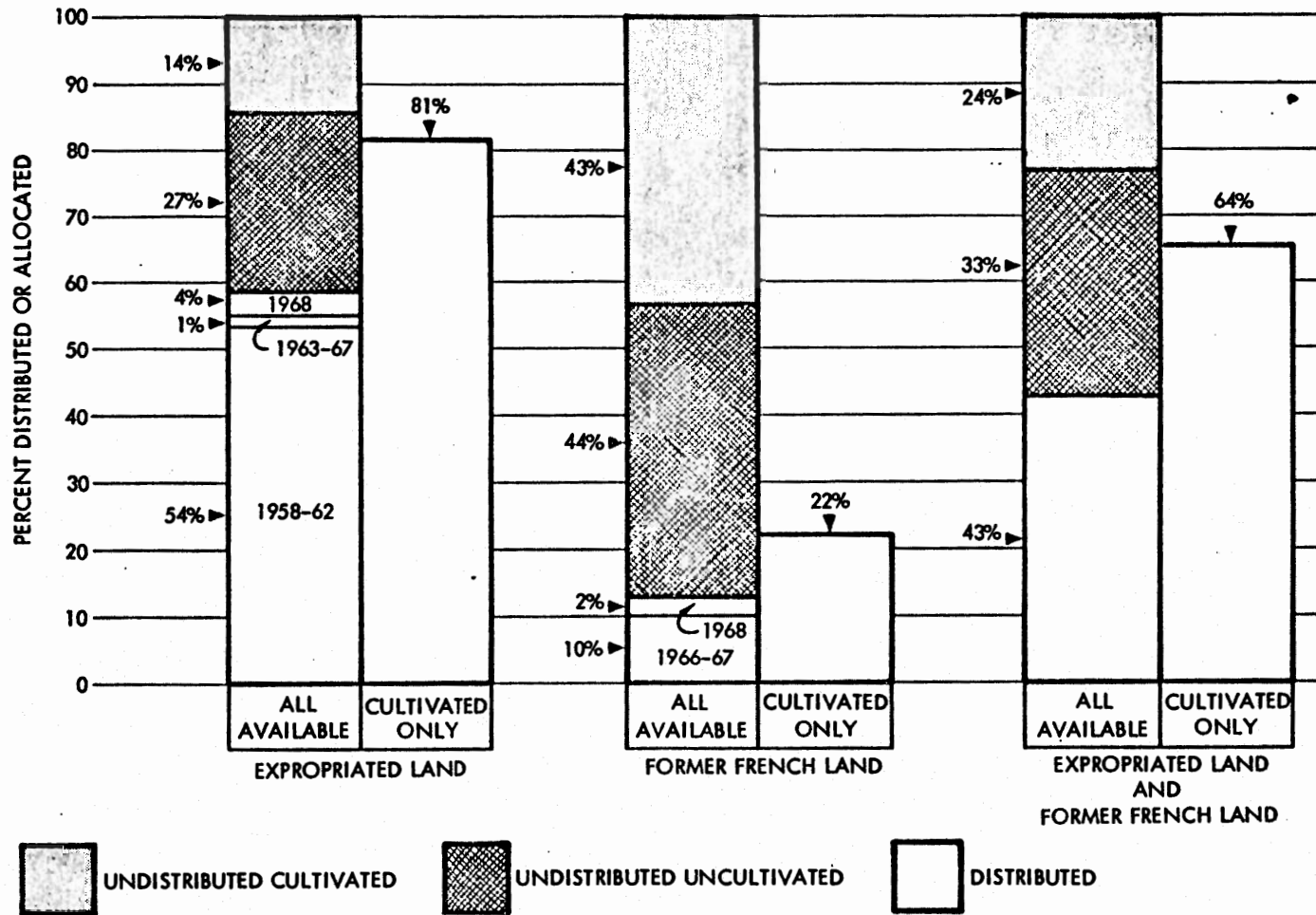
Figure 2  
HISTORICAL DATA RELATING TO EXPROPRIATION  
AND DISTRIBUTION OF LAND UNDER ORDINANCE 57, 1956-67  
Republic of Vietnam



SOURCE: Directorate General of Land Reform, Ministry of Land Reform and Agriculture.  
Prepared by USAID/ADDP, Saigon

Figure 3

PERCENTAGE OF GOVERNMENT OWNED LAND DISTRIBUTED  
AS OF JULY 15, 1968



Source: Table 1 and Figure 3

In 1961, the GVN determined that rents would be collected from occupants of former French lands. At the same time, management of the lands, including the collection of rents, was turned over to provincial authorities, providing for 60% of the rent collections to be deposited in a national budget, with 40% being retained in the province.

In August 1965, the decision was made to distribute these lands in accordance with Ordinance 57 procedures regarding the sale of expropriated land. As already discussed, an important consideration regarding the current status of former French lands was more than one-half of the 229,259 hectares may currently not <sup>have been</sup> ~~be~~ distributable because of insecurity or uncultivability. To further expedite distribution, the GVN instructed, in March 1968, that all future rental payments on former French land would apply toward the purchase price of the land in cases where the tenant has <sup>d</sup> requested ownership. A total of about 28,000 hectares was distributed as of mid-1968, most of which was distributed in 1967 and 1968. (Figures <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> and <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>)

I.D.3. Overall Impact - In assessing the contribution of the Diem Land Reform Program toward its principle objectives, listed in paragraph I.B.1. above, an academic analyst has had this to say:\*

"The success of the Diem Program in achieving these objectives is questionable. While the reforms were important steps against the power of the

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\*Extracted from C. S. Callison, op. cit.

landlords, their total effect was apparently small.

"The program probably had only a minimal effect on political stability, for several reasons. Although a large percentage of the tenants did sign the required contracts with their landlords, none of which could specify a rent of more than 25% of the total annual harvest, in actual fact subterfuge of the law has been widespread....

"While (survey) figures are subject to question, the personal interviews conducted by both Sansom <sup>1/</sup> and SRI (the Stanford Research Institute) <sup>2/</sup> provide ample evidence that landlords have not hesitated to demand illegal rents if they could get away with it. Where lower rents did exist, they could not be attributed to the Diem Regulations, which were not enforced, but rather to pressure from the Viet Cong....

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~~2/ Extracted from C.S. Callison, op. cit.~~

<sup>1/</sup> Robert L. Sansom<sup>M</sup>, The Economics of Insurgency in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1970, p. 61.

<sup>2/</sup> William Bredo, op. cit., Working Papers



"If landlord exploitation was reduced by the Diem Reforms, it was reduced very little; nor was a large, new class of small land-owners created. By 1968, under both Ordinance 57 and the French Land Purchase Program together only 132,208 farmers had received title to their land or could expect it someday. <sup>1/</sup> This was about 10% of the number of tenants in the country.

"It is difficult to see how unenforced rent regulations and such a small redistribution program could have had much effect on political stability. In fact about half the Vietnamese-owned riceland expropriated and all the French land was retained by the government (until 1967-8) and rented out by local administrative officials to provide government revenue, instead of being redistributed as promised. Along the Central Coast where political dissatisfaction with Saigon has been historically more intense than in the Mekong Delta, the Diem Reforms had virtually no effect whatsoever...

"The amount of income redistribution from landlords to poor farmers was also minimal, in view of the ineffectiveness of rent control provisions and the small number of actual land recipients.

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<sup>1/</sup> William Bredo, op.cit., Summary Volume, p. 11. They received 294,453 hectares, or an average of 2.2 hectares each.

Since the latter had to make annual payments for the land roughly equal to the legal 25% rent level, <sup>1/</sup> they would have apparently enjoyed higher incomes only in "secure" areas where rents had remained higher than that. Only one-third of the new owners had made any payment to the government at all, however, before subsequent payments were cancelled by the LTTT Law in 1970, and only 22% of all payments due had been collected. <sup>2/</sup> This indicates that some income redistribution did occur,

(cont. →)

<sup>1/</sup> J.P. Gittinger, Studies on Land Tenure in Vietnam, U.S. Operations Mission to Vietnam, Dec. 1959, p. 5.

<sup>2/</sup> William Bredo, op.cit., Summary Volume. p. 73

Although it cannot all be attributed to the intended Diem Program. Inflation in the late 1960's greatly diminished the real value of these payments, as well, so about 10% of South Vietnam's tenants should have been made better off than before. This change can hardly be called revolutionary, but at least it reversed previous trends.

"If tenant incentives to invest in increased agricultural production were to be improved by reducing his rents and fixing them to a prior average yield, the Diem Program again was not very successful.

The land recipients had been placed in a slightly healthier economic situation, but their numbers were small, as discussed above.

"Agricultural production does seem to have been encouraged by special contract inducements to bring virgin and abandoned lands into cultivation. Type B and C contracts for abandoned and uncultivated land were registered for a nationwide total of 452,387 hectares by 1959.<sup>1/</sup> Rice area cultivated in the Delta rose from 1,572,000 hectares in 1954 to 1,810,000 in 1959, and Cochinchinese rice exports, after falling to zero in 1956, climbed back up to 246,000 metric tons in 1959.<sup>2/</sup>

"Regarding increased investment in industry by former landlords, SRI has this to say:<sup>3/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> Wm. Bredo, op.cit., Working Papers, v.1-2, p. D-110

<sup>2/</sup> Sansom, op.cit., p. 262.

'This (1967 Absentee Landlord) survey...reveals that some of the absentee landlords have either sold all their land or some of it and have transferred their wealth to other business endeavors. Commerce, particularly, and industry seem to be capturing the interest of these landowners in preference to agriculture.

'As a result of the expropriation of holdings of large landowners under Ordinance 57, landlords are no longer able to accumulate great wealth. Today the merchant appears to be succeeding the landlord as the wealthy investor, and the landlords appear to be moving into commerce and industry. In this case, it means a transfer of wealth from agriculture or from the land to commerce, industry, and real estate development.'

"In summary, it seems that the Diem Land Reform Program had little effect on political stability, only a small role in redistributing income, a moderate effect on agricultural production by increasing the cultivated area (and by improving incentives for 10% of the tenant farmers), but perhaps greater success in encouraging wealthy landlords to invest in non-agricultural pursuits. Most of its shortcomings

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<sup>3</sup>/ Wm. Bredo, op.cit., Working Papers, v.4-1, p.80.

resulted from the high retention rate of 100 hectares, leaving too little land as excess to be redistributed and leaving the feudal landlord-tenant agricultural system basically unchanged, with all its social and political consequences, and from a lack of enforcement of rent controls. The second failure followed from the first, since effective enforcement of provisions against landlord interests was unlikely so long as the landlords themselves remained in control of the rural political structure."

## II. 1966-68: Renewed Interest and Efforts in Land Reform

II.A. The Diem Legacy and the Viet Cong Challenge (As the concluding subsection above indicated, the Diem Land Reform package, although representing a step in the right direction, was rather ineffective in achieving any major improvement in the basic land tenure conditions facing the South Vietnamese tenant farmers. The proportion of all Delta farm operators renting their land was probably reduced from around 70 to 60 percent, and not much else really changed. The Government of Vietnam, in the meantime, was facing an increasing challenge from the National Liberation Front and other groups within the Viet Cong alliance in the rural areas, a not small part of whose appeal revolved around the land question.

Viet Cong Land Reform - There is evidence that a substantial part of South Vietnam was under the control of the Viet Minh just before the Geneva Accords, but little is known of the amount or location of land that was redistributed by the Viet Minh. Of the absentee landlords interviewed in the SRI Landlord Survey, 65 percent indicated that at least some of their land was under Viet Minh control in 1954.\* Over 80 percent had had some of their land redistributed by the Viet Minh. By 1956, there had been a slight improvement (15-20 percent) in the security status of their land, and it may be reasonably assumed that during this period and for the next few years these and smaller landlords took advantage of this improvement in security conditions to reclaim their land and to evict Viet Minh-appointed occupants. The number of landlords and area affected by such evictions cannot be estimated, but for Viet Cong land reform to have been effective

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\* SRI Absentee Landlord Survey. See Wm. Bredo, op.cit., Working Papers, Vol. IV, Part 2, p. B-31. All of the land of a quarter of those surveyed was under the control of the Viet Minh at this time.

it must have been significant. The return of the landlords is still used as a basic propaganda theme by the Viet Cong and as a basis for expropriation and redistribution of land. Thus, the way was prepared for the second cycle of Communist land reform in Vietnam--this time under the Viet Cong. •

When the Viet Cong insurgents resumed revolutionary war in the Republic of Vietnam after the Geneva Agreements in 1954, they initially followed the pattern begun nearly a decade earlier by the Viet Minh. On the matter of land reform as a method of gaining peasant support against the GVN, the Viet Cong effectively applied, and improved on, the lessons learned from the Viet Minh.

The strategic value of land reform in revolutionary war was stated in a Viet Cong document captured in the Republic of Vietnam: "The essence of the national problem is the farmer's problem. The basic problem of the farmers is land. This is a strategic problem we can never neglect."\* In theory, the Viet Cong land reform embodied essentially the same slogan "Land to the Tillers" used by the Chinese Communists and the Viet Minh. The agrarian policy of the Viet Cong, according to an editorial in the North Vietnamese newspaper Nhan-Dan (People), "is to eliminate radically all oppression and exploitation in the countryside, liberate the peasant, and fulfill the slogan 'Land for the Tillers.'"<sup>†</sup>

With the exception of nationalistic propaganda, the Viet Cong employed essentially the same themes as those used by the Viet Minh. In place of French landowners, the Viet Cong substituted "Vietnamese traitors" as the "enemies" of the peasants, and they were to be eliminated and their land redistributed.

Preliminary Redistribution. During the early periods of activity (1954-60), the Viet Cong organization was clandestine. At that time, the initial Viet Cong land reform consisted of taking land previously redistributed by the Viet Minh and reacquired by GVN supported landlords and giving it back to the Viet Minh-appointed peasants that had been tilling it before. This form of redistribution required little administrative apparatus and placed no great burden on the Viet Cong organization. Although such a form of land redistribution was nothing more than a measure aimed at disrupting GVN control in an area, it did serve the Viet Cong well in allowing the insurgents to fulfill their promise of

\* The South Vietnamese Communists and Rural Vietnam, JUSPAO Saigon, August 1966, p. 7.

† Quoted in Douglas Pike, Viet Cong, p. 278.

providing land to those who supported them. The areas of earliest Viet Cong land redistribution usually were those most remote from government centers of control or were areas where Communist influence had been continual since 1945.

The increase in insurgent activity and the growth of the Viet Cong organization after the formation of the NLF (National Liberation Front) in South Vietnam in 1960 led to further Viet Cong land redistribution.\* Under the guise of the NLF, the insurgents expanded the land redistribution to include a wider range of landowners for expropriation. According to a former Viet Cong cadre, a "provisional land reform" was implemented that entailed the confiscation of "land belonging to landlords who didn't cultivate it themselves and the land of people who had already left. . .".† Many of those who left the villages were landowners whose land had been expropriated first by the Viet Minh and a second time by the Viet Cong. Other landowners did not even return to their land in the villages after 1954, and their holdings were summarily redistributed by the Viet Cong.

An early target for the Viet Cong was the GVN land reform program initiated in 1956. Under this program, the government had limited individual holdings to 100 hectares of riceland; any remainder was sold to the government and then resold to peasants on a 12-year installment basis. The Viet Cong placed great emphasis on dissuading peasants from participating in the GVN land reform program. The Viet Cong told the peasants that acceptance of such land would validate the claims of landowners whose property had been redistributed by the Viet Minh. Moreover, the Viet Cong made every possible effort to sabotage the land reform program and often resorted to violent tactics to prohibit participation.

Although the revolutionary goals of the Viet Cong guided the direction in which tactics affecting land tenure were employed, political expediency often shaped their selection and timing. When a particular tactic held promise of gaining power among the peasants, it was employed. When there was danger that control would be jeopardized by using it, the tactic was withheld or postponed. A secondary consideration, influential especially under conditions of incomplete control.

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\* To avoid further confusion in terminology, Viet Cong (literally Vietnamese Communist) will be used throughout to describe the insurgent organization in the Republic of Vietnam. The NLF is only one of several organizations operating within the Viet Cong.

† The RAND Corporation, AG-391:59.



of power, <sup>was</sup> ~~has been~~ a desire to increase the production of rice, so necessary to support both peasantry and the guerrilla forces of revolution. This necessity to avoid excessive disturbance of production <sup>served as</sup> ~~has been~~ a generally moderating influence on tactics affecting land reform.

*by the mid-1960's.*

Status of Viet Cong Land Reform Despite the continual efforts of the Viet Cong to gain peasant acceptance of land redistribution, there was considerable dissatisfaction among the peasants about the practice. Not only did the peasants complain that Viet Cong cadres in the villages redistributed the land unevenly, but that they also redistributed the "fertile land to the cadres and the dry land to ordinary villagers."\* A more serious charge by the peasants was that the village classification, expropriation, and redistribution of land had caused disruption in the villages. A former cadre said that the Viet Cong "recognized that the land distribution was a bad policy because it had created turmoil inside each village and had generated discontentment."† Another former Viet Cong saw the problem with the redistribution more specifically: "The Front [NLF] took the land from the middle-class farmers . . . and this was a great failure for the Front."‡

In expropriating and redistributing land belonging to "middle peasants," the Viet Cong deviated seriously from the classic Chinese and Viet Minh policies of gaining peasant support for revolutionary war through land reform. Although the middle peasant§ is not basically a revolutionary, i.e., he has vested interests in his land and property, he does maintain a closer identification with the majority of landless peasants living in villages than with the large landowners. Mao Tse-Tung took into full account the fact that the middle peasant played an indispensable role in revolutionary war and that he was also the most productive, and many of them were initially selected to head the popular associations and local militia in Chinese villages.

Apparently, the problems created by land reform in the villages were greater than the Viet Cong had anticipated. In what would seem an indirect admission of failure of past practices, a document dated 1965 and captured in 1966 spelled out the plan for the coming year in which all

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\* The RAND Corporation, PIE-79:71.

† The RAND Corporation, DT-69:6.

‡ The RAND Corporation, AG-599:24.

§ Recall that, as stated previously, the middle peasant owned less than 5 hectares and in status stood between the rich peasants (5 to 50 hectares) and the poor peasants (landless or tenant farmers).

previous directives on land reform were suspended. The document directed that "the dissemination and implementation of the directive previously sent . . . will be temporarily suspended concerning land reform." More important, it was specifically directed that "the reliance on poor farmers . . . and the solidarity with middle farmers must be properly maintained since these classes form a solid foundation . . . in the rural areas."\*

It could ~~not~~<sup>would</sup> be foretold (by 1968) if the Viet Cong ~~was~~<sup>would</sup> be able to regain the necessary support of the "middle peasants" in alliance with other peasant groups as a basis for waging revolutionary war. However, it did appear that the increased importance placed on gaining middle peasant support was a major change in Viet Cong land reform policy and would ultimately have an effect on the overall strategy of the revolutionary war in the Republic of Vietnam.

For the Viet Cong, the overriding consideration in the implementation of land reform was its usefulness in seeking to gain the commitment of the rural population to the revolution. In contrast to GVN land reform policies which were highly centralized, the Viet Cong adapted its land policy to local conditions, leaving it to the Viet Cong leadership to determine how, where, and when to apply land reform measures to achieve optimal results. Thus, the Viet Cong took advantage of opportunities to apply these measures as they arose and to implement or slow down land reform as Communist control of the population varied and as the intensity of the conflict changed. This characteristic flexibility allowed the Viet Cong to create the essential local political support before having to impose demands on localities for the massive resources required to bring the revolution to a successful conclusion.

*ignore under*

The ultimate goal of Viet Cong land policy was to create a Communist society based on a dictatorship of the proletariat. The terminal acts of Communist land reform are the collectivization of land and the final elimination of private ownership as a social incentive. It is notable that these final acts in the process, while they are features of the North Vietnamese, Chinese, and Soviet land reform programs, had not as yet been introduced by the Viet Cong in South Vietnam. The reason lies in the violence of the popular reaction to the elimination of traditional concepts of land tenure. As a result, these features could not be introduced until the Viet Cong were in full control of the apparatus of government. Until then, the beneficiaries of Viet Cong land reform were deluded into thinking that some form of private ownership would be retained in the future Communist society.

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\* The South Vietnamese Communists and Rural Vietnam, op. cit., p. 11 (emphasis added).

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Comparison of GVN and Viet Cong Land Reform Policies - The GVN was in direct competition for the same elements of the rural society and the same land that the Viet Cong required for the conduct of the insurgency. It was not surprising, therefore, that the GVN encountered forceful opposition to its land reform programs from the Viet Cong. In addition to efforts to destroy the effectiveness of specific GVN programs, the Viet Cong conducted a parallel land reform program of its own. Included in the two programs were many common elements and concepts, but the basic philosophies differed significantly, as pointed out above.

Land Distribution - The basic concept of "Land to the Tillers" under<sup>ay</sup>ly~~ing~~ both GVN and Viet Cong policies of land redistribution. Under the GVN Ordinance 57 policy, all privately held riceland in excess of 100 hectares was expropriated: about 450,000 hectares. An additional 230,000 hectares was purchased from landowners of French citizenship. Due to conditions of insecurity, a substantial proportion of these lands was not considered distributable by the GVN. ~~in 1966~~

The land redistribution program of the Viet Cong was competitive with that of the GVN. It<sup>s</sup> application created conditions that tended to complicate GVN administration of land affairs and reduce the effectiveness of the appeals associated with the GVN land policy. The 1967 SRI Village Administrative Chief Survey, although conducted in areas that were relatively more secure than most of the Mekong Delta, revealed that Viet Cong land redistribution had been implemented in so<sup>me</sup> of the areas covered

in the survey. These data, which are confirmed by captured Viet Cong documents, indicate that the Viet Cong tended to delay redistributing land until it <sup>came</sup> ~~comes~~ under its full control. The data also reveal that not all lands under the control of the Viet Cong -- roughly half in the sample -- had been redistributed. However, the land area controlled by the Viet Cong in the Mekong Delta exceeded that distributed under Ordinance 57 by a considerable amount. Since most of this land had been under the control of the Viet Cong for a number of years, it is probable that this land had been redistributed in accordance with established Viet Cong policy. If so, the number of families benefiting from the Viet Cong land redistribution could easily have been several times the 117,000 who received land under the Ordinance 57 Program.

The retention limit of 100 hectares applied by the GVN in the expropriation land under Ordinance 57 contrasted sharply with the ideal size of land holding sought by the Viet Cong. Through the application of threats, excessive taxation, and outright confiscation, the Viet Cong effectively reduced the size of individual holdings to an amount sufficient to support the immediate requirements of the household. The size of individual holdings in Viet Cong-controlled areas varied from 1 to 20 hectares depending on population pressure, the productivity of the land, and the size of the household. The average size of Viet Cong holdings was between 1 and 5 hectares. The latter figure was the preferred upper limit in single crop areas, with 2 to 3 hectares the upper limit in areas of double cropping or excellent soil fertility. This size of holding corresponded to that of the Viet Cong middle

peasant class. It also corresponded roughly to the average size of plot distributed under Ordinance 57 and to the view expressed by respondents in the SRI Surveys on the amount of land sufficient to support the average household.

Although the number of landlords ~~owning~~ owning 100 hectares of land was (by 1968) small relative to the number of smaller landowners and tenants, a substantial number of owners having between 5 and 100 hectares would still have qualified under Viet Cong standards as rich peasants and landlords. The Viet Cong <sup>were</sup> ~~was~~ thus still able to point to the image of landlordism in the rural society, despite the GVN Ordinance 57 Program. The 5-hectare limit appeared to have been accepted both by the Viet Cong and the majority of peasants as an ideal size of holding. The Ordinance 57 retention limit of 100 hectares was 20 times that required for the average household to exist comfortably.

### Landlord-Tenant Relationships

The efforts of the Viet Cong to attract the loyalties of tenants tended to obstruct the application of the GVN tenancy reform program and, in some cases, to make it unattractive and even inapplicable.

BEST AVAILABLE lives of the GVN with regard to landlord-tenant relationships were to place limits on the rents paid by tenants for the use of the land, to increase tenure security, to require rental relief in cases of crop failure, and to give the tenant the first right to buy the land should the landlord choose to sell. For each of these objectives, the Viet Cong had a competitive program of its own. Whereas the GVN rental limits ranged from 15 to 25 percent, the Viet Cong limits ranged from 0 to 30 percent; whereas the GVN sought to prevent unjust eviction of the tenant by the landlord, the Viet Cong prevented the landlord from selling his land. The Viet Cong also provided protection against crop failure. The transfer of ownership to the tenant was accomplished through uncompensated expropriation of the land and its distribution to the tenant.\*

Thus, wherever the Viet Cong was able to apply its land reform program, the GVN was effectively prevented from implementing its own policy. The landlord was subject to the influence of the Viet Cong even in hamlet lands rated as GVN-controlled. Of the 54 hamlets visited in the SRI Hamlet Resident Survey, all but six of which were rated as secure, 33 (61 percent) indicated the presence of Viet Cong intimidation; and in the 37 villages visited in the SRI Village Administrative Chief Survey, 29 (75 percent) had experienced kidnapping or intimidation of some kind.

Although the impact of the Viet Cong was by no means uniform, it would appear that in Viet Cong-controlled areas, most of the land had been redistributed--which is interpreted to mean that in these areas, landlordism had been abolished by the Viet Cong. Even where Viet Cong land

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\* National Liberation Front Land Policies,, Wm. Bredo, op.cit., Working Papers, Vol. III, Appendix B, pp. 115-20

redistribution was not yet complete, it appeared that the landlord had been rendered politically ineffective as a force in the society and tenure security was guaranteed by the Viet Cong.

The acquisition of Ordinance 57, French, and other lands made the GVN the largest single landowner and landlord in many villages and hamlets. SRI Surveys indicated that existing controls were inadequate to prevent malpractice in the administration of these lands. Malpractice had been the subject of extensive Viet Cong propaganda to discredit the GVN in the eyes of the rural population. GVN lands were generally highest on the list for Viet Cong expropriation and redistribution. Because they were owned by the GVN, the Viet Cong had no problem in rationalizing their expropriation. Until the GVN succeeded in divesting itself of these lands, opportunities for corruption were likely to remain and little benefit could be derived in attracting the farm people to support the GVN.

Other than vituperative propaganda of the type applied to all GVN activities, the Viet Cong displayed little interest in GVN landlord-tenant regulations. This may be explained, in part at least, by the ineffectiveness and unenforceability of the regulations. Even in secure areas, the administrative feasibility of GVN landlord-tenant regulations was questionable. Viet Cong intimidation of the landlord was a common and effective practice in many "secure" areas as well as in contested areas. It appeared that the Viet Cong had achieved a greater impact on the landlord-tenant relationship than had the GVN. Certainly this was true in Viet Cong-controlled areas.

In his research in the Mekong Delta, Robert Sansom found rents falling markedly the more distant were the tenants from a secure road or guardpost, averaging between 5 and 10% of the annual harvest for the Delta as a whole, but rising to 25-40% in secure areas. He concluded\*

"By 1966, the benefits of the Viet Cong Land Program, initiated with the 1960 General Uprising Campaign, were manifest. Approximately 817,000 tenants in the Delta were apprised of a single overriding fact: Rents paid on land in the Delta were determined by the Viet Cong and the market; they were not affected by Vietnamese Government Regulations or Laws."

By creating an environment of insecurity in the contested areas and by redistributing the land of landlords under its control, the Viet Cong placed the GVN in the position of having to protect the landlord from Viet Cong terrorism, help him to recover his land, and otherwise defend his right to collect rents. Efforts of the GVN to change this image resulted in laws that would recognize certain rights of the Viet Cong-appointed recipient of the redistributed lands. While the GVN sought to relieve the Viet Cong-appointed occupant of his fear of eviction through these measures, the landlord could still proceed with the establishment of lease contracts and with the collection of rents. The reinstatement of

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\* Robert Sansom, op.cit., p. 60

the landlord, combined with the apparent ineffectiveness of rent controls, detracted seriously from the psychological appeal of a return to GVN control. It appeared that anything less than full rights of ownership or at least the option to purchase the land would fall short of the desired effect of drawing the tenant to the side of the GVN.



### Administrative Control

In administering land reform measures, the Viet Cong displayed a flexibility and adaptability not present in the GVN program. The Viet Cong deliberately decentralized decision-making to village and hamlet levels to adapt policy to differences or changes in local land tenure conditions. In contrast, GVN administrative control was highly centralized, making adaptation of the law to local conditions difficult.

Higher echelons in the Viet Cong called for the gathering and evaluation of vast amounts of detailed demographic information at the village and hamlet levels. As a result, Viet Cong estimates of the situation were exceedingly thorough and displayed an insight into the problems encountered at these levels that could only be attributed to excellent intelligence and extensive experience. Thus, while the lower echelons were given the flexibility they required to adapt their resources to Viet Cong land reform policy and to the local situation, they were monitored continuously. If a serious problem arose at the local level, there was an immediate response to define its nature and extent and to apply the leadership and resources required to correct it. For example, it was not unusual for Viet Cong Provincial and Interprovincial Headquarters to assign high level personnel to take over the leadership of village and district organizations temporarily, in order to repair the damage caused by GVN intelligence penetration or by GVN military or political successes.

This characteristic flexibility in the application of land reform extended to the testing of more advanced concepts of Communist land reform

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in selected areas. Cases were noted in captured documents of Viet Cong experimentation with the purging of landlords and other undesirables and with concepts of collectivization. This experimentation demonstrated Viet Cong sensitivity and adaptability to the level of indoctrination of the society, which was not equaled by GVN administrative approaches.

Viet Cong administration of land reform contrasted with that of the GVN in several other significant ways. For example, there was no Viet Cong equivalent to the time-consuming application, title search, and registration procedures; cadastral surveys lease contracts registers and most of the other administrative formalities associated with GVN administration of land affairs. Since the Viet Cong were concerned with occupancy rather than ownership or tenancy, a single set of simplified records was sufficient. Documents purporting to be Viet Cong titles were captured, but in many Viet Cong-controlled areas, the most common arrangement seems to have been an oral understanding. As long as the Viet Cong remained in control and the recipient remained loyal, his rights seem to have been honored. There was, however, a fundamental dif-

ference in the character of the administrative arrangement. The GVN formalized the ownership arrangement, and while the recipient was obligated to pay the government for the land, the rights granted were recorded in a permanent title. The Viet Cong granted rather than sold the land to the recipient, but the ultimate status of the land remained deliberately unclear, the implication being that at some future date the land may have to be returned to the Viet Cong. Although the Viet Cong played down this aspect of its redistribution, the distinction demonstrated

the basic insincerity of Viet Cong land redistribution and thereby provided the GVN with material that could, if properly exploited, reduce the psychological impact of Viet Cong land redistribution significantly.

#### Problems of Viet Cong Land Reform Policy

While the flexibility of Viet Cong Land Reform Policy seemed desirable, the Viet Cong had problems of communication that frequently resulted in misunderstanding and excesses, as well as in unforeseen reactions from the population. Problems of interpretation generated seemingly

endless reams of dialogue between the implementing agencies and the leadership of the Viet Cong.\*

Viet Cong land reform ran into difficulties where the rural society was evenly structured; where there was an absence of the essential Viet Cong symbols of oppression--the landlord and the indifferent government official; and where the people had experienced truly representative local democracy. Other problems encountered by the Viet Cong arose from shortages of land for redistribution, the incongruities associated with preserving certain private enterprise features of existing society, and the mass abandonment of land as a result of large scale military activity.

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- \* While the existence of political problems in the implementation of Viet Cong land reform policy may seem to be a contradiction, they did exist, though their magnitude was impossible to determine on the basis of available data. The volume of discussion on these problems by the Viet Cong may simply indicate that the Viet Cong leadership was alert to them and was attempting to alleviate them before they became too serious.

## II.B. U.S. Advisory/Assistance Effort

II.B.1. Strategy Controversy over Land Reform - In the late 1960's, there was much controversy over whether the further redistribution of land to the landless and the land poor could be an important means of winning the commitment of the rural people to the GVN. Basic to the issue was the peasants' attitude towards land ownership.

One view was that the farmer of Vietnam, steeped in a long heritage as a tenant, had no understanding of land ownership and what it <sup>could</sup> ~~can~~ mean to him, and that he would therefore be satisfied with tenancy subject to full security of tenure rather than ownership. Another view was that land ownership was indeed a vital issue with great and fundamental meaning to the farmer of Vietnam. According to this view, the Vietnamese farmer's whole idea of social justice was inextricably intertwined with the basic urge to own land, and permanent occupancy with security of tenure could never be an adequate substitute for land ownership.

The first view was in opposition to historical Communist doctrine and the strategy used by the Viet Cong, which deliberately took land from landlords and distributed it to the landless. It is certain that in the Republic of Vietnam, the Viet Cong catered to

what farmers basically really want -- landownership -- and eliminate the landlords' political opposition in order to secure control of the rural areas.

As a political issue, the case for land redistribution hinged on the desire for land ownership. If this desire was strong, a land reform program could have far-reaching consequences in securing the support of Vietnamese farmers for the GVN by creating a psychological impact that, if the program were conducted extensively and was well-implemented, could affect the outcome of the war.

One of the major goals of USAID/Saigon during this period was to resolve this controversy by developing reliable evidence one way or the other and to determine whether a major land redistribution effort could be made feasible in an era of insecurity, using new and imaginative techniques.

II. B.2. USAID Personnel, Funds and Projects Related to Land Reform, 1966-68.

The U.S. Agency for International Development resumed project assistance in 1966 when improved security and political stability made resumption of land administration work feasible. A small staff of land tenure specialists in Saigon did its best to assist the GVN in developing policies and getting the program going again. In January 1967, a pilot program was initiated by (EARI) in An Giang Province to apply aerial photography and photogrammetry to replace the ground surveying required for land identification and title work.

Virtually all of the U.S. dollars allocated (\$1,196,000) in 1966 and 1967 were for the technical services of three advisors, the EARI project team, and the Stanford Research Institute research team. The VN\$30 million counterpart fund was divided into two projects that will be discussed below. This program was revised and continued in FY 1968.

During the period, the USAID internal organization fluctuated somewhat and the size of the land reform staff along with it. Early in the period, the USAID Assistant Director for Agriculture was responsible for land reform, with a Land Reform Advisor and a full time assistant to provide technical assistance. In 1967 the Land Reform Advisor became the Special Assistant to the Mission Director for Land Reform, and the staff was increased to four. Also available for assistance in 1967 and 1968 were the EARI Project Team working in An Giang and the Stanford Research Institute Team engaged in a land tenure and land reform fact finding study.

In 1968, after fluctuating from seven to two, the land reform staff was fixed at six persons for FY 1969. The Special Assistant again became the land Reform Advisor, now reporting to the Associate Director for Domestic Production (ADDP).

Engineers  
Agency for  
resources  
mentary

## AID Program (FY 1966 and 1967)

### The An Giang Project

In November 1966, two project agreements between the U.S. Agency for International Development and the GVN dealing with land reform\* were signed totaling VN\$30 million (about \$254,000 at the rate of exchange of 118 to 1). One for VN\$16 million in An Giang province was designed to: assist the GVN to carry out all land tenure and reform; establish in each village a Village Agricultural Affairs Committee; help the EARI (~~Engineer Agency for Resources Inventory~~), U.S. Corps of Engineers, in collecting data, conducting surveys, and developing an integrated plan for agrarian development; and demonstrate, through the support of the EARI activities, the use of improved aerial photogrammetric techniques to expedite cadastral survey and title issuance procedures.

Work on the An Giang project proceeded slowly.† According to the Director General, the work was 20 percent completed in January 1968, and about VN\$10 million had been expended (the money not having been made available until mid-1967).‡ By the end of 1967, 20,245 hectares (or 50,000 acres) had been surveyed with GVN field teams providing on-the-ground verification of land identification and occupancy, and it was estimated that the project would be completed by the end of 1968.§

### The "Other Provinces" Project

The other agreement, for VN\$14 million, was designed to: provide advice, assistance, and material support to the GVN to carry out (by December 31, 1968) all land tenure and reform actions in specific priority areas; establish the position of Village Land Registrar in 60 villages and to establish or revive in these villages a Village Agricultural Affairs

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\* Pro-AG agreements, both No. 430-11-120-311, on file in the Office of the Special Assistant to the Director (USAID) for Land Reform.

† From interviews with various GVN and U.S. officials concerned with the project (especially the Directorate General of Land Affairs; the Special Assistant to the Director, USAID, for Land Reform; and the EARI Director of the Land Tenure Project, An Giang).

‡ From an interview with Mr. Nguyen Van Trinh, then Director General, Land Administration.

§ From an interview with the Director of the Technical Directorate.

Committee; and implement a land tenure research study to ascertain and evaluate farmers' attitudes and reactions toward various land tenure relationships.

With regard to this project, it was reported that VN\$11 million of the funds allocated to the project had been committed by March 1, 1968.\* The money had been spent for salaries for employees† working on short term reform (draftsmen, surveyors, and administrative personnel to process expropriated land), equipment, office machines, supplies, and so forth.† Funds were used to supplement the ministerial budget to hire extra personnel in certain provinces. The remaining VN\$3 million was earmarked for the Center for Vietnam Studies, in support of the SRI research project.‡

Specific accomplishments are difficult to pin down because the additional personnel were not reported by province and even if they were, they could not easily be correlated with the project work done or not done. The Director General stated that the additional employees had been used to accomplish a census of tenant contracts--this was one of the key objectives of the 1967 program. The Director of Land Reform Directorate stated that some distribution of land titles had been accomplished under Ordinance 57, former French lands, and public lands.\*\* Also, some progress was made on land identification in the provinces of Central Vietnam.††

A spot check of performance in a few of the provinces specified in the agreement revealed that progress was made in some specific areas (e.g., survey and distribution of former French lands in the SAIT Plantation in Ninh Thuan and the establishment of 19 Village Agricultural Committees in the same province).††

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\* From an interview with the Land Reform Advisor.

† Some 204 employees were hired for both projects. A breakdown between the two was not readily available. Apparently as a part of the salaries, some of the money also was used to provide the customary Tet bonus.

‡ From an interview with the Director, Administrative Services, Directorate General of Land Affairs.

§ From an interview with the Land Reform Advisor.

\*\* From an interview with the Director of Land Reform.

†† From an interview with Nguyen Xuan Kuong, USAID Land Reform Advisor's staff.

‡‡ From an interview with the Province Land Affairs Chief.



However, it is also apparent that other objectives specified in the project agreement were not attained, e.g., establishment of "the position of Village Land Registrar in 60 villages." In the latter case, the position of Village Agricultural Commissioner was established in December 1966, which covered the functions originally contemplated.\*

#### FY 1968 AID Program

As was noted in Table 6, VN\$35,000,000 was allocated for FY 1968. This was to support the accelerated distribution of expropriated and former French lands, training of village personnel and information and education programs for farmers.† Pursuant to an agreement reached in June 1968, an augmentation organization to accelerate the distribution of expropriated and former French lands was established (see Figure 9). A "Special Land Reform Fund Committee" was set up to administer the fund, consisting of the Director General for Land Affairs (DGLA) and the USAID Land Reform Advisor to the Associate Director for Domestic Production (ADDP/LR). During the summer of 1968, a pilot program was inaugurated in some of the villages of Chuong-Thien and Kien Tuong Provinces by USAID and DGLA officials. Until this time, no applications for former French land had been filed in the provinces. With the help of an air leaflet drop to farmers in the areas, and by working through the village governments, an excellent response was obtained. In one village, a remarkable 394 applications for former French lands were collected (about half the farmers in the village) and processed in a period of two months (including distribution of titles) by a special team using aerial photographs for identification. President Thieu and the Minister for Land Reform and Agriculture, Trung Thai Ton, participated in the title distribution ceremonies.

The GVN instituted mobile teams to train village and provincial officers to carry out the program. By September 1968 a total of 155 villages in 15 Delta provinces having former French lands had held training sessions for village and hamlet officials. By decentralizing the distribution process and using village committees, the GVN hoped to be able to distribute all of the cultivable former French land by 1970. As of September 1968, 168 employees had been hired (21 at the central level and 147 in the provinces and villages) for this effort to speed up the land distribution program.

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\* Decree 198, op. cit.

† Information provided informally by the USAID Land Reform Advisor in September 1968.

CORDS Advisory Staff

Operating directly under the MACV (Military Assistance Command, Vietnam), CORDS had full responsibility for the U.S. contribution to the revolutionary development (pacification) program, including revolutionary development cadre, public safety, new life (or rural) development, psychological operations, refugees, census grievance, chieu hoi (open arms), and research and development programs. Its field offices also exercised some advisory effort for land reform. Land reform advisory services at the province level were exercised either through the Agricultural Advisor or the New Life Development Advisor. It may be noted that at the CORDS regional level, there were no Vietnamese counterparts for land reform in 1968.

In mid-1967, a number of joint task forces were organized by CORDS to generate meaningful, coordinated programs for implementation of the entire pacification effort. Subsequently, a ten-point action program on rural development was generated jointly by USAID and CORDS, and although the land reform part of this program was not approved, it was agreed that the AID mission rather than the CORDS staff would continue to take leadership in the land reform program. Thus, the AID mission had central responsibility for planning, funding, and advising the GVN on land reform, but had no field staff (except as provided by the EARL team in the An Giang project). CORDS supplied the field staff for all other related programs and attempted to provide some part-time support for land reform at the province level.\*

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\* From interviews with the former CORDS Liaison Officer to USAID Special Assistant to the Director, Land Reform and with the Political Affairs Officer responsible for local government at the U.S. Embassy. Also, field visits were made to two regional headquarters and three provincial headquarters.

## II.C. Results: Belated Recognition of Land Reform Appeal.

There seems to have been a close relationship between the extent of U.S. support and the degree of progress in land reform programs. Obviously, other important factors also had a bearing on the situation including the deteriorating security in the rural areas and an uncertain and fluctuating national political posture.

With improvements in political stability beginning about 1965, some improvements in the GVN policy area began to be made, such as decisions on: distributing former French lands; granting settlers in Land Development Centers title to their land; exempting tenants from paying back rents and landlords from paying back taxes; regularizing and distributing of squatter-occupied lands; and so on. However, implementation had practically ceased; it was not until 1967 that some limited results again began to be evident. This coincided with the impact of increased U.S. advisory and financial assistance beginning with FY 1966.

Encouraged with the feasibility indications of the pilot redistribution projects testing new techniques, land reform advisers armed themselves with the results of the exhaustive research effort conducted by the Stanford Research Institute. In response to the controversy described above (Section II.B.1.), the SRI had designed a series of questions, administered as part

of its Hamlet Resident Survey, to determine the strength of the desire of farmers to own land.

The responses to the survey gave overwhelming empirical evidence of the desire of the landless farmers in the Southern Region to own land. The overwhelming proportion of those who said they wanted to own land and the consistency among them in this desire -- regardless of conditions of sale -- are rarely seen in sample surveys of this type.

The SRI Report went on to explain,\*

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\* Wm. Brede, op.cit., Working Papers, Vol. IV-1, pp.83-6.

"The desire of farmers to own land is closely intertwined with their attachment to the soil where they live. A tenant living in a thatched hut on one-third of a hectare expressed this vividly and simply to an American member of the team. To the initial question: "Do you want to own the land you till, and to have legal title to it?" the immediate response was, "Yes." To the second question, "Why do you want to own it?" the response was equally unhesitating: "Because my ancestors lived here and because to own it will secure my future." With a few words he linked ownership to his past, present, and future.

"This feeling about the land has been called by a Vietnamese colleague (of the SRI Research Team) an obsession of the farmers of the Delta. From another point of view, land ownership is a sheer economic necessity. When the farm laborer or the tenant becomes too old to work, he has no source of income since he has no land to rent out and most likely he has accumulated no life savings. He becomes economically dependent on someone else, generally a member of his family. The ownership of land takes care of the past, his ancestors; the present, his livelihood; and the future, his descendants; and provides assurance that his descendants will take care of him and that they will continue to venerate their ancestors...

"The preference for land ownership in one's own village is clear, but the strong urge to stay in the place of one's ancestors is clearly outweighed by the strength of the desire to own land even if it means moving elsewhere...

"...the farmer's desire to own land is overwhelming (even) compared with the availability of technical assistance, which would cost them nothing, and the availability of credit to buy farm implements, which would cost them little. In contrast, to acquire land, farmers would commit themselves to repayment of a large block of future income over an extended time period...

"These findings support the view that a government program which provides the Delta region rice farmer with more technical assistance and more farm production supplies and equipment but fails to provide him with land ownership will fall far short of meeting his aspirations."

This and other research slowly convinced high U.S. and GVN leadership of the importance of land reform, a persuasion which led to the sweeping Land-to-the-Tiller proposals in 1969, opening the final chapter of GVN land reform efforts. In informal discussions with USAID officials in March 1968, the Minister of Land Reform and Agriculture outlined his objectives for land reform and verbally requested U.S. technical assistance in (1) evaluating land reform policy alternatives and (2) getting present programs completed (i.e., distribution of various undistributed lands, land titles, etc., as promptly as possible).

Land reform was not <sup>solely,</sup> ~~solely~~ although it was mainly, a Vietnamese matter. The United States took an active role beginning in the mid-1950's with the basic GVN legislation on expropriation and land rental agreements. Also, the United States had a huge stake in the successful outcome of the pacification effort, in which land reform could play a key role, one way or the other.

Therefore, it seemed to many observers very important, as the U.S. Land Reform Advisor stated, for the United States "to take a position of firm backstopping leadership."

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II.E. Statistical Appendix for Periods 1955-65 and 1966-68

PROJECT ASSISTANCE FOR LAND REFORM  
U.S. Dollars  
1955-1968

	Dollars (by fiscal year)	Counterpart Funds
Assistance 1955-60		
Administration of agrarian reform project	\$ 282,000	\$ 3,257,000
Land development project	4,582,000	6,794,285
Subtotal	\$4,864,000	\$10,051,285
Assistance 1966-68		
Land reform project	2,778,000	550,847
Total	\$7,642,000	\$10,602,132

Supporting Schedules

Year	Dollar Assistance (by FY)	Counterpart Support (VN\$000)
<u>Administration of Agrarian Reform Project (#430-11-120-089)</u>		
1955	\$ --	100
1956	70,000	23,632
1957	171,000	13,963
1958	16,000	40,170
1959	21,000	25,830
1960	4,000	(est)10,000
Total	\$282,000	VN\$113,695
US\$ Equivalent		\$3,257,428

Remarks: Dollar assistance includes \$205,000 of commodities, ie., 17 jeeps, 275 motorbikes, 180 bicycles, surveying and drafting, equipment. Two advisers (Gittinger and Ladejinski) were financed as were travel grants to GVN officials to other Asian nations to observe land reform administration. Counterpart financed salaries and related costs of 700 field surveyors plus certain related GVN staff.

<u>Land Development Project (#430-11-120-144)</u>		
1957	\$3,207,000	— VN\$ NA
1958	934,000	NA
1959	200,000	NA
1960	241,000	NA
Total	\$4,582,000	VN\$237,800
US\$ Equivalent		\$6,794,285

Remarks: \$4,421,000 of the dollar assistance was for commodities, primarily construction materials, vehicles, and equipment.

<u>Land Reform Project (#730-11-120-311)</u>		
1966	14,000	VN\$ --
1967	\$1,182,000	30,000
1968	(est)1,582,000	35,000
Total	\$2,778,000	VN\$65,000
US\$ Equivalent		\$550,847

Remarks: Virtually all the \$1,196,000 obligated in FY 66 & 67 were for the technical services of: (i) 3 advisers, (ii) EARI cadastral team, (iii) SRI research team. A small amount was used for transport for field staff and specialized equipment.

Source: U.S. Agency for International Development, Washington, D.C.



### III. 1969-75: Land-To-The-Tiller (LTTT) Program

#### III. A. Land Tenure Conditions in 1968

During the period prior to the LTTT Program, it was estimated that roughly 60% of the riceland was still being farmed by tenants. Typically, a tenant farmer in the Delta cultivated 2.0 hectares (5 acres) and paid rent in secure areas of 25% or more of his crop. In the Central Lowland, he cultivated one hectare (2.5 acres) and practiced metayages, i.e., sharecropping. The farmer, whether he owned or rented the land, was the manager. The landlord did not normally participate in the production process, furnishing neither seed, credit, farm implements, nor marketing outlets. Out of approximately 2.2 million hectares (5.5 million acres) of riceland, as much as 1.3 million hectares (3.2 million acres) were estimated tenanted by over 600,000 farm families. Landowners were characterized by relatively small holding; 85% of the land holdings were in plots of 7.5 hectares (18.5 acres) or less. There were very few large landowners. The land reform program of the 1950's, plus insecurity and changing economic opportunities, had generally caused larger landowners to move to the cities and towns, <sup>where they</sup> no longer wielded <sup>ed</sup> significant influence either in rural areas and villages, or <sup>in</sup> national politics.

Historically, tenancy, accompanied by exploitive practices of landlords, had inhibited development and had often been cited as one of the causes of unrest and insurgency in rural Vietnam. The Viet Minh, and subsequently the Viet Cong, recognized the potential of those social injustices and

exploited them for their own causes. Where rural lands fell under their control, they often redistributed them to poor farmers or significantly reduced rents. In those areas where the Viet Cong had assigned lands to farmers, it had been done to assure the loyalty of the farmer, to maintain production of the land, and to encourage the farmer to oppose his own government, national or local. <sup>1/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> MacDonald, Salter, "The Broadening Base on Land Reform in South Vietnam", Asian Survey, August 1970, Volume X, Number 8, page 724.

### III.B. U.S. Advisory/Assistance Effort

It was the opinion of some that the U.S. failed to grasp the importance of land reform and to vigorously press such a program with the Vietnamese, until the 1968-70 period, for an array of reasons. Among other things: (1) failure to generate the relevant data on land tenure conditions, GVN land practices and insurgent strategy in a usable policy format; (2) an overly technical and economic orientation to USAID project activities in rural areas, at least through the first half of the last decade; (3) policy hang-ups on political stability; (4) and failure to look closely at and grasp the relevance of the contemporary successful Asian Land Reforms in Japan, Taiwan and South Korea.

U.S. support to GVN land reform efforts essentially hardened in the period beginning late winter of 1969 with the appointment of Cao Van Than as the Minister of Land Reform and Agriculture and of Le Than Anh as the Minister's Special Assistant for Land Reform. In the following months, the Land-to-the-Tiller concept emerged and was approved after vigorous debate. U.S. involvement in these major steps was continuous and deep. By the summer of 1970, the U.S. Mission was positively committed to the support of a bold, comprehensive land reform program.

#### III.B.1. Strategies

The objectives of U.S. Government support of the LTTT Program were quite clear: (a) to cut away at long last the ground of Communist exploitation of the "Land Issue"; (b) to increase the acceptance of and

loyalty to GVN authority by the rural peasantry; (c) to enhance the credibility and effectiveness of GVN institutions in rural areas; and (d) to incorporate progressively the mass of tenant farmers into the body-politic and economy of the GVN.

The sensitivity of Vietnamese officials to the willingness of the U.S. Mission to back, financially and technically, a genuine land reform program enhanced the U.S.'s influence with them during the period <sup>from the</sup> drafting of the legislation through the initial drive to meet the first year's land distribution target. The Associate Director for Land Reform (ADLR) was in effect invited to become thoroughly engaged in the fate of Land-to-the-Tiller. This tactic, ADLR's response to it, plus the consensus that existed on the objectives of LTTT, <sup>e</sup>keynoted the role of the U.S. in the program as it <sup>e</sup>merged in 1969 and <sup>developed thereafter</sup> ~~as it existed in December 1971.~~

During this period the U.S. role, though never defined in terms other than that of advisor, sought to maximize its influence on policy questions and facilitated the energizing and monitoring of performance. <sup>2/</sup>

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<sup>2/</sup> Richard L. Hough, The Land-to-the-Tiller Program: An Appraisal End-of-Tour Report, USAID/Saigon, March 30, 1972.

### III. B. 2. Personnel Assigned and Funds Expended

As stated in previous sections, the United States, after bitter debate, strongly supported the new land reform initiative of the Vietnamese Government and by 1970 had already provided over three million dollars of technical assistance to help advance the program. The total cost of the program was estimated to be 52 billion piasters, or \$400 million at an exchange rate of 118 to 1. AID's commitment, subject to appropriations from Congress, was \$40 million calculated as half the amount <sup>(which were to be compensation)</sup> (20% of the total program) that would be required to make initial payments to the landowners. In FYs 1969 and 1971, AID asked Congress for <sup>an initial</sup> ~~a total of~~ \$25 million ~~for support~~ <sup>total</sup> of the \$40 million commitment for land reform. These funds provided dollar foreign exchange to the GVN to help absorb the inflationary impact of increased demand for imports and were obligated directly to Commercial Import Programs (CIP) under PAGA procedures. Later in FY 1973, a separate request for the additional \$15 million was made to Congress. The final \$15 million were provided in FY 1974 out of regular CIP funds and were not additive. The first \$25 million were separate and additive to the CIP request. In addition, USAID/VN assisted the Land Reform Program by providing technical assistance through US dollar project funds. The principal use of the project funds was to finance US direct-hire and Participating Agency Service Agreement (PASA) personnel. During the peak years of the program (1971-1972), 85 to 90 percent of the total dollar funds were expended for this purpose. Project funds were also used for contract personnel to assist in program implementation, operational research, and aerial photography. Approximately 115 land reform participants were trained in the US and third-country locations.

U.S. Land Reform personnel assistance (direct-hire and PASA personnel) peaked at 33. Their role, under the leadership of the ADLR, closely adhered to the position that LTTT was a Vietnamese program and the Vietnamese had to do the job themselves. Except for the USAID Computer Center, operational support and a staff job in LTTT research, the ADLR staff continued to function in an advisory role. ADLR did, however, <sup>in close cooperation with its</sup> ~~with~~ GVN counterparts, develop major policy and procedural recommendations for various tasks.

### III. C. LTTT Law and Implementing Decrees

In May 1969, new distribution procedures were initiated, aimed at radically simplifying distribution procedures ~~in order~~ to reduce ~~the~~ processing time on title application<sup>s</sup> and to facilitate a higher volume of processing. The procedures also called for the use of aerial photography for land identification and automatic data processing for the production of titles and related registration documents. This was following a land-occupancy freeze which recognized the right of current cultivators to their lands, even if they had obtained occupancy while the land was under Viet Cong control.

Following the passage of LTTT in March 1970, a decision was made to give priority to the job of getting title distribution moving and institutionalized while giving secondary attention to the development of the landlord compensation system. This was the obvious thing to do, given the fact that the political purposes of LTTT were aimed at the mass of tenant farmers.

The Land Reform Law, designed to provide ownership to all farmers who cultivated the land, was approved by the National Assembly <sup>on</sup> March 16 and

promulgated by President Thieu on March 26, 1970. The Law:

1. Sought to eliminate tenancy by expropriating lands not directly cultivated by the landowner for distribution free of any charge to farmers.
2. Applied to all riceland and garden land, except for ancestral worship land not to exceed 5 hectares per family.
3. Permitted one owner to hold up to 15 hectares provided he directly farmed the land.
4. Permitted the retention of five hectares of worship land per family.
5. Set a maximum limit of land that one farm family may accrue under this Bill to three hectares in the South and one hectare in Central Vietnam.
6. Cancelled all remaining payments due from those farmers who had already purchased expropriated and former French lands.
7. Authorized a Special Committee to establish the rate of compensation for land, which was to be equivalent to two and one-half times the average annual paddy yield of the land over the preceding five years.
8. Provided for the compensation of former landowners 20 percent in cash and 80 percent in monetary bonds carrying 10 percent interest and redeemable over an eight-year period.
9. Denied the right of persons acquiring land under this law to transfer or otherwise encumber this land for fifteen years.

10. Established the following priorities in the distribution of land:

tiller;

family of war dead;

retired or discharged soldiers, civil servants or  
government cadre;

those soldiers, civil servants and cadre who abandoned  
land because of the war;

farm laborers.

The second part of the Land Reform program, called the Montagnard Land Identification and Kien Dien Registration program was designed to:

- a. identify, record on maps and aerial photos, hamlet boundaries, and give titles to villages for their hamlets (buon) lands within the boundaries; and
- b. give titles to individual families for lands within hamlet boundaries which each family farms.

### III. D. Results: Institutional, Economic and Social Reforms

Since there still remained, in mid-1968, a large number of titles authorized under Ordinance 57 but not yet distributed, the GVN placed first priority on eliminating the inventory of riceland which had made it the largest landlord in the country. A program to accelerate the distribution of expropriated and former French lands became the forerunner to the Land-to-the-Tiller program. Close to 90,000 hectares were distributed during the latter part of 1968 and



1969. (See Chart I for status of Land Distribution, December 1969, in Appendices.)

The Land-to-the-Tiller program has been characterized as one of the most sweeping land reform programs carried out in the twentieth century in a non-communist country. The GVN's immediate goal under the LTTT program was to distribute 1,000,000 hectares of land to tillers by March 26, 1973, the third anniversary of the LTTT law. The goal was met, and computer statistics showed that as of February 28, 1975, applications were approved for 1,297,132 hectares of land, with titles to 1,136,705 hectares actually having been distributed to new owners. Chart II shows a complete breakdown of data for the entire program (Appendices).

The Montagnard land reform program had also made significant progress toward its goals. As of June 30, 1974 (the latest available data), there were 1,661 identified main-living areas (MLA) covering 1.7 million hectares, which exceeded the original goal of 1,400 MLA's. Individual land ownership titles were issued to 37,680 tillers covering 85,427 hectares. Nevertheless, the program, to the detriment of the Montagnard, had not been administered in accordance with the provisions of applicable decrees; and trespassing by outsiders, which the program was to have eliminated, was a continuing problem.

The year and a half prior to the fall of the Thieu<sup>u</sup> Government in South Vietnam saw an accelerated dismantling and withdrawal of virtually all U.S. technical and monetary assistance to the Land Reform program. The unilateral policy decision was made and implemented without official notice to AID/W. Though the LTTT program quantitatively achieved its goal of

distributing one million hectares to landless tenants, major parts of the program were far from completion. These activities were delineated in an April 1973 End-of-Tour Report which was submitted to the Mission for comments (refer to Bibliography, item 2).

The major tasks remaining in the LTTT program were summarized as follows:

1. To complete distribution of remaining tenanted land estimated at 300,000 hectares.
2. To monitor compensation procedures to minimize corruption.
3. To assist in the completion of work at village level including the upgrading of master overlays where needed.
4. To unify and improve the land registration system.
5. To assist the GVN in making necessary changes in the LTTT laws.

It would be impossible to assess what were the implications, if any, of the rapid withdrawal of U.S. support in 1974. There was some evidence that distribution of land, compensation to landlords, etc., declined during the period AID was withdrawing support, as well as indications that the LTTT was being phased out, in spite of large areas of private and communal land which should have been included in the program but which had remained apart from the program. *There was speculation* ~~It also speculated~~ that the program providing Montagnards with titles to private land was soon to be discontinued even though less than half of the recipients had received land titles. However, the GVN recognized that in order for land reform to be ultimately successful there should have been a unification and standardization of land laws and land registration.

Toward this end, the DGLA had proposed two projects: a country-wide territorial survey, and a revision of land registration records.

In conclusion, the Land Reform program was designed to broaden the GVN's political base in the rural areas by eliminating tenancy and providing land tenure security. The program was to be accomplished by offering land titles to tillers under the Land-to-the-Tiller program and by validating land claims of Montagnards under the Montagnard Land Identification and Registration Program. None of the GVN laws that implemented these programs restricted their accomplishment within a specific period of time or to quantitative goals. Goals were established, however, to measure the progress of the programs in terms of land distributed and MLA's identified. Much of what was anticipated by these measurements <sup>was</sup> ~~has been~~ achieved.

There was still much to do to eliminate tenancy and provide land tenure security through the land reform program. Past land reform programs had failed in Vietnam because of eventual government indifference. There was evidence, as well as examples, of indifference in the past program, once interim goals were met, which could have prevented the attainment of ultimate goals. In late 1974, the GVN should have concentrated on areas that theretofore managed to avoid the program, and new projects should have in no way been given priority over the current program. <sup>Because</sup> ~~(Given the fact that)~~ the program was being allowed to deteriorate, ~~(there would have been the possibility that)~~ it could have been subjected to mass criticism from in-country and outside sources. USAID/VN <sup>might</sup> ~~(could)~~ have, in turn, been blamed for that situation because it was instrumental in promoting the program and assisting in its progress.

Despite a few shortcomings, compromises and areas for which the program was poorly designed (such as the floating rice areas, where the three-hectare distribution limit was too small, and the coastal lowlands of Central Vietnam, where tenants were often better off than the landlords), the effect of the LTTT program in the Southern Region, which was home for almost two-thirds of the total population and produced about 85% of the total annual rice harvest, was substantial and favorable. The Land-to-the-Tiller program was one of the most significant and most successful projects undertaken by the GVN with AID support. Its long-run economic, social and political impact promised to be profound.

Regarding the achievement of its major political goal, that of denying the land issue to the Viet Cong, it is significant that most observers agree the insurgent<sup>was</sup> in the <sup>e</sup>Mekong Delta was won by the GVN. The local Viet Cong infrastructure, so powerful a force in the mid-1960's, had been reduced to relative impotence. In the final tragedy of its struggle for existence, the GVN lost not a war of insurgency, but rather a conventional war of modern and mobile army divisions.

Below are extracts from the concluding assessment of The Impact of the Land to the Tiller Program in the Mekong Delta\*, based on research in 44 villages of 9 provinces in 1972, to illustrate the apparent and anticipated effects of this program.

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\* Prepared and written by Dr. Henry C. Bush, Gordon H. Messegee, and Roger V. Russell, Control Data Corp., for ADLR, U.S. Agency for International Development, Vietnam, December 1972.

1. LTTT has caused a big shift in income in the delta downward, from the few who had much to the many who had little. LTTT has also ~~caused~~ an increase in the total cash in the delta.
2. Most delta farmers credit the major improvements in their lives, their neighbors' lives, their hamlets, and their villages during the past several years to security and LTTT. Many also attribute them to prosperity in SVN as a whole, and better farming. LTTT appeals greatly to farmers and it gets credit for more than it could possibly have effected.
3. New owners under LTTT, compared to tenants, credit far more of the changes during the past two or so years to LTTT, to changes in farming methods, and to general prosperity. New owners talk more about new agricultural techniques and better farming methods. They use more of them. They are aware of more changes in their own and their neighbors' lives and in their hamlet and village. They give the Government credit for more of these changes. LTTT makes it possible for extenants who have become owners of the land they farm to prosper. It seems to provide new owners with an incentive to risk more, invest more in farming, produce more, and work harder than do tenants. They also buy more consumer goods than do tenants.
4. In poorer provinces, compared to more prosperous provinces, more farmers and more new owners credit LTTT with having made them less poor. More farmers and more new owners there seem to support and identify with the Government, both central and local, because of LTTT.

5. LTTT has greatly reduced inequality among villagers. It seems to have largely eliminated the traditional sense of inferiority of lifetime tenant farmers. This new sense of equality, of having the superior landlord off one's back, should decrease disaffection and reduce revolutionary potential in the delta.
6. LTTT seems to be a factor in changes of values among delta farmers. They are behaving in terms of middle-class motivations and they invoke middle-class values. These value changes should help stimulate self-induced sustained economic development.
7. LTTT seems to be a major causal factor creating political support for and identification with national Government. Land ownership is so greatly desired by delta tenant farmers that LTTT seems to offer an important choice and to diminish farmer neutralism and indifference to the Government. Other countries' and other peoples' experience with the effects of successful land distributions which reduce inequality, similar to LTTT, suggest that this is conservative political support for the regime and the political status quo. In villages in which LTTT has been implemented to a high degree and in which most tenants are now owners of the land they had farmed in tenancy all their lives, LTTT also seems to help create unity and mutual trust among farmers, local officials and local military and paramilitary persons.
8. In villages conspicuous for their dynamism in many respects and for the fact that LTTT has reached most tenants and made them farm owners, villagers' cooperation against the enemy (on the local village scene) is visibly greater. Many, including former beneficiaries of enemy land distributions, contrast the enemy's land distributions to LTTT by the GVN--always very favorably to the GVN. Many say that the LTTT program has

reduced enemy influence in their hamlet and village. In many villages land has been distributed and title granted under LTTT to ex-Viet Cong families or to ex-Viet Cong returnees (hoi chanh)....

9. The impact of LTTT in villages in which it has been implemented to a great degree, compared to its absence in villages in which, after 2 years of the program, LTTT has not yet begun or has just begun recently, is pronounced. Where there is a high degree of LTTT implementation there are also increased investments in farming, increased farmer entrepreneurship and increased tendency to adapt crops to the market, increased consumption of goods, a more optimistic view of life, and community and mutual trust among families within villages and between citizens and local officials, local military and local paramilitary persons. Delta villages in which LTTT has not yet begun or has just begun recently (2 years late) are largely those which have had to relocate for security and only in 1970 or 1971 have returned to their original site (RTV'd), or those which are still very insecure, or those which have indifferent or incompetent local officials or officials biased against the LTTT program or which have no village land registrar or have one who knows nothing about LTTT, or which are geographically isolated from District and Province government. Such villages are enclaves of isolation and backwardness, and almost no major GVN programs seem to be moving and accomplishing anything much in them.
10. LTTT has stimulated the unskilled landless (farm laborers) and a high percentage of those tenants who are farming land registered as entailed worship land (exempt from LTTT) to complain that they are still landless or poor because in permanent tenancy and that LTTT does nothing for them. This is sizeable number, about 10-15% of all delta farm families.

11. Disfunctions and malfunctions of the LTTT program in implementation seem to be in the 6-8% range---strikingly few for so massive a program. Most complaints by tenants are of false registry of farm land as worship land, or of landlord coercion and landlord refusal to accept the LTTT law. These seem to be geographically concentrated in the floating rice area of the upper delta. Most complaints by exlandlords are that they have not yet received compensation from the GVN for lands transferred to extenants. Less than 1% complain that officials have abused their authority in LTTT implementation. The LTTT program seems strikingly grievance-free, except for the 10-15% of landless and tenants farming on worship land whose complaint is that it does nothing for them.

LTTT is a major success in pacification of the delta. LTTT land distribution procedures are relatively simple and sensible ....

12. LTTT is creating increased demand for agricultural technology. The MLRAF can anticipate increased demands for agricultural technical services and extension services. LTTT is stimulating delta farmers to produce more. The Ministries of Finance and Interior can anticipate increased tax revenues and decreased need for village budget subsidies in the delta. The Saigon business community can anticipate increased markets among delta farmers for middle-class goods (e.g. household furnishings, lumber, cement and other construction materials.) The



Ministry of Education and the numerous private schools in Saigon can anticipate increased enrollments of farmers' sons and daughters in secondary schools. The delta will be increasingly linked to the Saigon and national economy.

In sum, the Land to the Tiller program is a splendid means to pacification. It creates equality among farmers and abolishes lifelong tendencies of tenant farmers to think of their lives as static, hopeless, poverty-ridden and of themselves as inferiors. It stimulates them to greater production and more investments in farming. It is helping change their values to those of the middle-class. It is helping turn a once-disaffected, politically neutral mass of potential and sometimes actual revolutionaries (formerly providing rice, information, labor, and military manpower to the enemy) into middle-class farmers in support of the regime.

The final chapter in the story of land reform in South Vietnam has yet to be written, as the following article from the New York Times indicates:\*

## **NEW LAND REFORMS FOR SOUTH VIETNAM**

NY TIMES 10/14/75

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Oct. 18 (UPI)—The Communist Government of South Vietnam has begun new land reforms abolishing the "land-to-the-tiller" program established in 1970 by former President Nguyen Van Thieu, according to official press reports.

The reforms have been started around the imperial capital of Hue, 360 miles northeast of Saigon, and include the former United States Marine base at Phu Bai.

These are the first new land reform programs to be carried

out by the Provisional Revolutionary Government since the April 30 take-over by the Communists.

According to press reports here, the local government of the district near Hue has redistributed land to more than 10,000 farmers and confiscated land occupied by "Vietnamese traitors" who had received it under the "land-to-the-tiller" program.

"A new system of land distribution to peasants across South Vietnam is taking place and the land reform program of 1970 engineered and paid for by the American Government for the Thieu regime is completely abolished," the press reports said.

\* The New York Times, Oct. 14, 1975

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# CHART I

## LAND REFORM

### STATUS OF GVN LAND DISTRIBUTION, DECEMBER, 1969 IN ACRES (IN HECTARES)

<u>REDISTRIBUTION PROGRAMS</u>	<u>Total Area</u>	<u>Cultivable Land</u>		<u>Undistributed</u>	<u>Abandoned &amp; Uncultivable</u>
		<u>Distributed Area</u>	<u>Recipients</u>		
Expropriated Lands (Ordinance 57, 1956)	1,118,379 (452,785)	805,902 (326,276)	148,408	238,698 (96,639)	640,743 (259,410)
Former French Lands (obtained from GOF '58)	556,964 (229,540)				
<u>LAND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS</u>					
Land Development and Resettlement Centers (Refugees and Settlers)	368,018 (148,995)	71,877 (29,100)	21,337	21,441 (9,895)	271,700 (110,000)
State-owned Lands	819,842 (331,920)	13,728 (5,558)	7,270	210,221 (85,110)	595,893 (241,252)
Totals	2,873,203 (1,163,240)	891,507 (360,934)	177,015	473,360 (191,644)	1,508,336 (610,662)

Legend: Figures shown are in acres (or in hectares) - 1 ha.=2.47 acres

Source: GVN, Dir. Gen. of Land Affairs  
"Monthly Statistical Reports"

	<u>Applications Approved</u> <u>At Village</u>		<u>Titles Issued</u>		<u>Titles Distributed</u>	
	<u>Applications</u>	<u>Hectares</u>	<u>Titles</u>	<u>Hectares</u>	<u>Titles</u>	<u>Hectares</u>
1970	55,974	71,067	39,492	51,691	4,235	6,113
1971	347,040	427,041	335,758	411,777	273,183	336,580
1972	388,070	426,839	373,387	405,052	306,242	351,664
1973	232,921	268,429	204,733	227,900	291,888	221,746
SUB TOTAL	1,024,005	1,193,376	953,370	1,096,420	875,554	1,016,319
<u>1974</u>						
JAN	13,457 (1,037,462)	14,472 (1,207,248)	14,311 (967,681)	16,407 (1,112,327)	7,949 (883,503)	5,622 (1,021,928)
FEB	16,919 (1,054,381)	17,469 (1,225,317)	12,431 (980,112)	14,576 (1,127,403)	6,251 (889,754)	5,161 (1,027,689)
MAR	10,440 (1,064,821)	12,033 (1,237,350)	15,075 (995,187)	17,254 (1,144,657)	9,470 (889,224)	11,578 (1,038,807)
APR	8,802 (1,073,623)	9,329 (1,246,679)	16,359 (1,011,546)	13,813 (1,158,470)	11,402 (910,626)	11,509 (1,050,200)
MAY	2,123 (1,075,746)	2,652 (1,249,331)	1,804 (1,013,350)	2,057 (1,160,527)	1,604 (912,230)	1,927 (1,052,155)
JUNE	2,802 (1,078,548)	3,079 (1,252,410)	4,835 (1,018,185)	5,250 (1,165,779)	10,267 (922,497)	8,380 (1,065,511)
JULY	13,041 (1,091,589)	14,378 (1,266,783)	14,339 (1,032,524)	14,755 (1,180,532)	9,207 (931,704)	11,516 (1,072,119)
AUG	8,199 (1,099,788)	7,035 (1,273,823)	8,546 (1,041,070)	7,211 (1,187,743)	11,756 (943,460)	11,975 (1,084,094)
SEPT	4,130 (1,103,918)	3,976 (1,277,799)	2,957 (1,044,027)	3,612 (1,191,355)	9,389 (952,849)	6,102 (1,090,145)
OCT*	7,198 (1,111,116)	6,448 (1,284,247)	5,332 (1,049,359)	5,308 (1,196,663)	20,520 (973,369)	23,737 (1,113,933)
NOV	1,540 (1,112,656)	1,701 (1,285,948)	139 (1,049,498)	172 (1,196,835)	6,347 (979,710)	7,221 (1,121,211)
1974 TOTAL	88,651	92,572	96,123	100,415	104,162	104,843
1974 TOTAL	(1,112,656)	1,285,948	1,049,498	1,196,835	979,710	1,121,211

\* October and November 1974 Statistics transcribed as a total for those two months.

W/ED/RD 1/26/75

Applications Approved  
At Villate

Titles Issued

Titles Distributed

<u>Applications</u>	<u>Hectares</u>	<u>Titles</u>	<u>Hectares</u>	<u>Titles</u>	<u>Hectares</u>
55,974	71,067	39,492	51,691	4,235	6,129
347,040	427,041	335,753	411,777	273,183	336,580
388,070	426,839	373,337	405,052	306,248	351,864
<u>232,921</u>	<u>266,429</u>	<u>204,733</u>	<u>227,909</u>	<u>291,868</u>	<u>321,746</u>
88,651	92,572	96,128	100,415	104,162	104,875
1,112,656	1,285,948	1,049,498	1,196,835	979,716	1,121,217
1,742	1,856	1,269	1,306	4,430	6,237
(1,114,398)	(1,287,804)	(1,050,767)	(1,192,141)	(984,146)	(1,127,454)
8,740	9,328	8,500	8,997	9,532	9,251
(1,123,128)	(1,297,132)	(1,059,267)	(1,207,133)	(993,725)	(1,136,705)